

BRITAIN'S BEST-SELLING DIGITAL CULTURE MAGAZINE

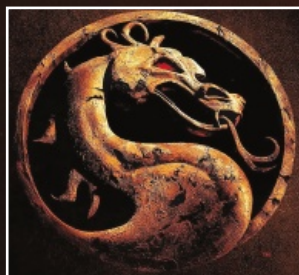
# PIXEL ADDICT

£6.50 ■ 2023 ■ ISSUE 14

## PLUS

- ▶ MORTAL KOMBAT MOVIES
- ▶ APPLE'S POWER MAC G4
- ▶ CLASSIC GAMES MAGAZINES WITH ALEX LEE
- ▶ NEW INDIE RETRO GAME RELEASES

## CELEBRITY GAMERS







**PAUL**  
paul@addict.media

**Ever met a celebrity?** I met Craig Charles in 2014 at Play Manchester. I was too nervous to chat but I did manage to get a photo which I hate, I'm stood in a strange leaning pose!  
**Best Resident Evil moment:** Seeing the Licker for the first time in *Resi' 2*! Much scarier than zombies!  
**Which arcade cabinet would you own if you had the space?** Easy, the two-player sit-down *Outrun 2* cab. I could spend hours on that!



**ANDREW**  
andrew@addict.media

**Ever met a celebrity?** I once sat opposite Danni Minogue in Wagamamas. I smiled at her and got a smile back! She was flanked by bodyguards.  
**Best Resident Evil moment:** The dogs crashing through the window in the original. Scares the heck out of me every time.  
**Which arcade cabinet would you own if you had the space?** *Outrun* or *Chase HQ*. Both classics that received diabolical 16-bit ports, and deserve to be played in their original glory.



**DUNCAN**  
duncan@addict.media

**Ever met a celebrity?** I visited the set of a 1980s kids TV show called *No. 73*. Don't remember anyone actually being there but I did get to mess with the local ITV weatherman's map in the news studio.  
**Best Resident Evil moment:** I only ever enjoyed *RE4*. When Mr Chainsawman first comes after you is a thrilling moment.  
**Which arcade cabinet would you own if you had the space?** There was a *Wipeout* cabinet. Would love one of those.



**GARETH**  
gareth@addict.media

**Ever met a celebrity?** Mr Tumble and I have shared a few laughs in between shoots.  
**Best Resident Evil moment:** Watching my eldest try to use the tank controls in *Resident Evil 2* and giving up in abject despair while still at the beginning of the game. Come on, it's not that hard to get used to is it...?  
**Which arcade cabinet would you own if you had the space?** Any late 1980s or 1990s pinball machine. Maybe *Terminator 2*.



**ALAN**  
alan@addict.media

**Ever met a celebrity?** I've met some fairly-famous musicians, comedians and sportsmen (Freddie Flintoft, Matt Le Tissier, Cozy Powell and Dave Gorman among others) but never any gaming or acting royalty.  
**Best Resident Evil moment:** The first appearance of the dogs in *Resi' 1*.  
**Which arcade cabinet would you own if you had the space?** Oh my - too much choice! I'll plump for a six-player *Daytona USA*. That would be fun!



**JOHN**  
john@addict.media

**Ever met a celebrity?** I've been lucky to have met quite a few, including Jon Hare, Ben Daglish and Archer Maclean. I also met Billy Connolly in the 70s.  
**Best Resident Evil moment:** I haven't really played any of them! I must admit, I didn't get on well with the strange camera angles in the original.  
**Which arcade cabinet would you own if you had the space?** Hard to name just one, but *Star Wars* would need to be it (sit in cockpit version.)

## EDITORIAL

Hello there. It's been a crazy few months. I feel like I've hardly been home with having to attend events each weekend! (*Dunc* - "Such a terrible burden!") In this issue you'll find some brief write-ups on my reports from NERG and PC Zone 30th Anniversary - and there's more events approaching, if you see any of our team at a show please say hi.

This issue we've got stars in our eyes thanks to the cover story from new writer Adam Peters. Back in Issue 9 we featured the Sony PlayStation and how it made gaming mainstream; but what about the decade or so before this? Were there any attempts by others to make computers and consoles seem edgy or cool?

Adam has been delving into the past looking at television actors, pop stars and celebrities, to see who happily admitted to using computers and saw the potential for them to be more than just kids' toys. Three VIP guests join Adam to discuss the impact computers had on their own careers and day to day life. It's great to hear that they all still have their finger on the pulse so many years later.

There's plenty of other articles to keep you entertained. I speak to Alex Lee who worked on a lot of games magazines from Europress and IDG Publishing, publishers which don't often get mentioned (other than in reference to *Amiga Action*!) so it was fantastic to get a little insight into *GB Action*, *Super Action* and *Sony Pro*.

For fans of obscure and rare technology devices we have articles covering the Handspring Visor, Casio PV-2000, Haiku OS and the Power Mac G4 Cube. I hope you too enjoy reading about failed or underrated machines, they all played their small part in shaping the technology we use today. We also have coverage of the original *Resident Evil* game, the C64 Mini console and some early Spectrum memories.

Last but not least, you'll find the latest Homebrew Heroes releases chosen by Marc. If you're reading this and you're a software or games developer, make sure to reach out to us via email so we can feature your work in a future issue!

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"The *Pixel Addict* team would like to thank all of our contributors and readers, this publication would not be possible without you! We are also extremely grateful for the ongoing help and support we receive from our sponsors and fellow addicts over at *Amiga Addict* magazine."







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Welcome to Pixel Addict magazine!  
Ver1.4 -- Year 2023  
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Power

PIXEL ADDICT



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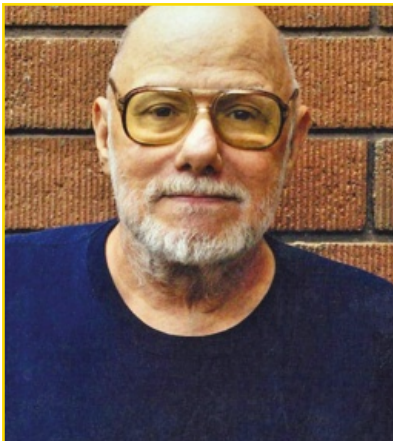
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### REST IN PEACE

Author of various computing books and manuals, Don Lancaster passed away aged 83 on 7th June 2023. Seen as a tech pioneer, he developed the TV Typewriter in the early 1970s which used TTL (Transistor-Transistor Logic) to create a low-cost system which could output graphics and alpha-numeric data to a TV. The hardware prototype is held in the Computer History Museum. Don wrote over 40 books about computing and electronics, as well as teaching computing at Eastern Arizona College. Our thoughts are with Don's family and we thank him for all the work he did throughout his career.



In further sad news, the world has lost another much-loved programmer. Legendary coder, John Gibson departed on 23rd July 2023. John had an amazing career, starting out on the Spectrum and continuing through to modern day games development on the PlayStation 4. A few of John's many pieces of work include *Cosmic Wartoad*, *Frankie Goes To Hollywood*, *Microcosm* and the standout series for Sony, *Motorstorm*. Our thoughts are with John's family and thanks for all the happy memories his work brought us.



John Gibson (third from left) was also a key team member at Imagine Software.

## - The Latest News For Ageing Tech Fans



*We predict programmes like Yesterday's Retro Electro Workshop will become more common, slowly taking the place of antiques and car restoration TV shows in catering for those born in the digital age.*

### CAN WE FIX IT?

The "we" is actually Rob Howard, who is known as a "super-fixer" and star of a new TV series on the Yesterday Freeview channel. *Retro Electro Workshop* sees Rob challenged to fix various electronic items. The first episode features the restoration of an Atari 2600, with episode two listing the Sinclair C5 as his next challenge. Plenty of other battered hardware will be showcased over the run of the series. Anyone who misses the first Sunday evening broadcasts at 11pm can catch up on UKTV Play: [www.uktvplay.co.uk](http://www.uktvplay.co.uk)

has also made a version for the Apple II which is the full game. You can find all the details and links here: [www.deater.net/weave/vmwprod/myst\\_vcs/](http://www.deater.net/weave/vmwprod/myst_vcs/)



### START MONKEYING AROUND

Commuting point-and-click fans rejoice! *Return To Monkey Island* has now landed on smartphones, so you can check out Guybrush's latest adventure on the go. We reviewed the game last year in Issue 8, scoring it a very decent 83%. The true challenge will be not to hum along to the music whilst on a packed train.



### IT'S A MYSTERY

Last issue we featured *Myst* and its sequels. It's a game which has always looked pretty, despite sometimes being confusing to play. Now, a *Myst* demake has been produced for the Atari 2600! The creator, Vince "deater" Weaver has a history of creating excellent demakes, including *Another World* and *Portal*. This isn't a full version of the game, but deater

### HAPPY RETRO RETURNS

QByte Interactive have released several well-known vintage games to current consoles. Now there are a couple of new additions to their *Classics* range for Switch, Xbox and PlayStation 4 and 5. *Risky Woods* is an action platformer originally released in 1992. With 12 levels, varied enemies and plenty of interesting weapons, it's worth trying out - titles in this range usually cost around £7.



More interesting though is a *Beat 'Em Up Archives Pack* which features *Iron Commando* and *Legend*. Both have had previous releases thanks to PIKO Interactive, but this is the first time as a double pack. Like all scrolling beat 'em ups they won't last for ages, but no doubt some of the team will be grabbing this set which is out now.



## GETTING HYPED FOR THIS

Recently, Blaze Entertainment (the team behind the Evercade brand) hinted at something new coming soon called HyperMegaTech, and now the first products have been announced. Two officially licensed handheld consoles featuring several built-in games are due for worldwide release this October and are already available for preorder.



The first handheld is the *Super Pocket Taito Edition* featuring 17 games including *Space Invaders*, *Operation Wolf* and *Bubble Bobble*. The second features 12 Capcom titles including *Final Fight*, *1942* and *Street Fighter 2*. Both editions are priced at £49. Oh, and did we mention the new consoles will also play Evercade carts?! Get all the info here: [www.hypermegatech.com](http://www.hypermegatech.com)

## A HELPING HAND

One of the most important aspects of life is mental health. Bullying and low self-esteem can take its toll. The charity Safe In Our World promotes mental health awareness, they've partnered with Peregrine Coast Press to release a mental health publication named *Sidekick: The Video Games Mental Health Journal*. It is 140 pages filled with mental health and gaming related activities, prompts and journaling pages to write or colour in. Find it here: <https://shop.peregrinecoast.press/pages/journal>



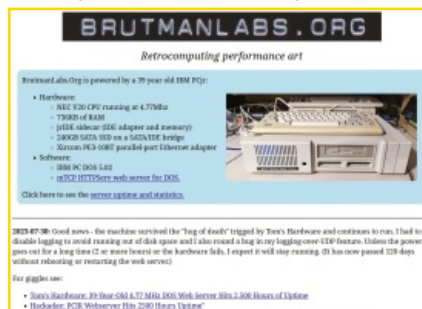
## LIMITED RUN SHOWCASE

It's a company which divides opinion with retro gamers, but Limited Run Games recently released their latest showcase of upcoming titles. A mixture of previously released games were shown as well as some new to certain territories. Packages such as *Jurassic Park Classic Games Collection* featuring the games released for NES, SNES and Game Boy have some nice looking sets with film related goodies.

Other stand out physical releases include *Clock Tower* (finally a Western release), *Castlevania Advance Collection*, *Gargoyles* (based on the 90s Disney series) and *Tomba!* (known as *Tombi* in the UK) which costs a lot if you want to own the PlayStation original. Keep up to date with stock availability, release dates and crushing disappointment for the really rare versions: [www.limitedrungames.com](http://www.limitedrungames.com)

## HOW LONG?!

We've covered the IBM PCjr previously in the mag and it seems some people still use it for important purposes. Brutman Labs have been using a slightly modernised PCjr to run their web server for 39 years. It has been enhanced with a 240GB SATA SSD installed and an IDE adaptor, with the machine's RAM now at 756KB. Its uptime shows 2500 hours of continuous work since being rebuilt last March! If you visit [brutmanlabs.org](http://brutmanlabs.org) you'll find several online articles about vintage tech which ironically are being hosted on vintage tech! Hmm, what shall we get this PCjr for its 40th birthday?



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

If you know of any events coming up or you're an event organiser, please email [pixel@addict.media](mailto:pixel@addict.media) and let us know!

### GAMESCOM 2023

**23rd-27th Aug 2023, Cologne, Germany**  
Gamescom is one of the world's largest computer shows. Just like EGX there is a mixture of industry types as well as the general public. With new games to play, merchandise to buy, cosplay and the latest hardware on display. Check out: [www.gamescom-cologne.com](http://www.gamescom-cologne.com)

### NEWCASTLE GAMING MARKET

**9th September 2023, Newcastle**  
A brand new city for Replay Events as they travel to the North East. Find all the usual traders you love, as well as some new ones. Held at the Gateshead International Stadium (same as NERG) it's a great venue. See their website at: [www.newcastlegamingmarket.com](http://www.newcastlegamingmarket.com)

### OXFORD GAMING MARKET

**23rd September 2023, Oxford**  
Replay Events' next games market returns to the South, held at The King's Centre. There will be plenty of traders

## SHOOTING STARS

We're big fans of preservation here on PA so this piece of news is fantastic! The Hard4Games YouTube channel shared newly found footage of the Super Star Fox Weekend Competition which was held in both the US and Europe in 1993. Players had to get the highest score in pursuit of prizes which included a holiday! There was also a tutorial to help the teams at the various venues to prepare and ensure the big event went off without a hitch. This was such a big event back then, so having footage preserved and shared 30 years later means a lot to gamers. Check the video from Hard4Games via this link: [www.pixel.addict.media/superstarfox](http://www.pixel.addict.media/superstarfox)



## A NEW COLONY FOR GAMERS

In late July, Antstream Arcade expanded their reach to Xbox owners. There are now over 1400 games on the service. Recently they have been adding a lot more of the Amstrad CPC back catalogue. What is strange to see, is that PlayStation titles *Loaded* and *40 Winks* are now on a rival streaming service to Sony's own! It's great to see Antstream grow. Check out: [www.antstream.com](http://www.antstream.com)

and a chance for early bird tickets. More info: [www.oxfordgamingmarket.com](http://www.oxfordgamingmarket.com)

### WIGAN COMIC-CON

**30th September 2023, Wigan**  
It's that time of year again when Robin Park Sports Centre in Wigan is overrun by stalls, guests, cosplayers and nerds! So far a couple of guests have been announced, check: [www.facebook.com/WigancomicconNWCCEvents/](http://www.facebook.com/WigancomicconNWCCEvents/)

### PLAY EXPO BLACKPOOL 2023

**7th & 8th October 2023, Blackpool**  
Another event *Pixel Addict* will be exhibiting at, please come and say hi! One of longest running games events will be held again at Norbreck Hotel in Blackpool. Expect talks, arcade games, stalls and more. Updates are found here: [www.playexpoblackpool.com](http://www.playexpoblackpool.com)

### LEEDS COMIC-CON

**15th October 2023, Leeds**  
The Royal Armouries will host *Unleashed Events'* large-scale pop culture show, this year entitled *Star Wars Unleashed*. Without a Trekkie in sight, may the Force be with you! Reserve tickets via: [www.pixel.addict.media/starwarscon](http://www.pixel.addict.media/starwarscon)





# Your POINTS of VIEW

What's your opinion?  
Send letters to pixel@addict.media

Gaming secret shames? Cheap shots? Are you bad at games? Have you ever taken any shortcuts when gaming to try to claim victory? We ask our readers...

## FACEBOOK

Andy Godoy

OK, here's one for you. When I was in my teens, my friend and I used to play *Street Fighter II* on the SNES. My friend was better than me and used to kick my butt, so one day (then every time after), I told him my 2nd original SNES pad was broken and he had to use a 3rd party SNES pad which was rubbish as the diagonals didn't work and the buttons were somewhat unresponsive (laughs).

That certainly evened the playing field and when he did ask to use my original SNES controller I'd tell him house rules meant I play with that one.

Jay Ifould

Playing *Road Rash 2* on the Mega Drive in 2 player mode. As soon as the green light showed to start racing, I used to plough directly into the side of my mate's bike as we were pulling away. He'd be screwed for several seconds and I could shoot off in front.

Dean Collins

E. Honda 100 hand slap and try and keep the rival in the corner... Is pretty much how to play Honda, still today in *Street Fighter 6*.

Jay Aaron Richards

I knew the walkthrough for the original *Leisure Suit Larry* by heart and still couldn't finish it 100%.

Khristian Rainford

I'm rubbish at fighting games. On *SoulCalibur* I chose Ivy and in survival mode I used to absolutely spam her 'Pick them up and throw them out of the ring' move. It got me a 92 survival streak but most of them were just that, I'm happy if I just get 20 wins on survival (laughs).

Mark Addis

Chun Li can sweep kick E Honda if done right during the move... I used to beat my friend that way then reverse it with the hundred foot kick... or spinning bird kick.



You may have guns and swords but sometimes a good door crushing is the way to go.

Dave Flynn

Gotta be the original Super Mario Bros cheat where you punch the ceiling, jump up and run along the roof and then get to the warp zones at the end.



Some of us needed help navigating the adult content in *Leisure Suit Larry*.

## TWITTER

@TimelessGamingCon

I'd spam Blanka's electricity move on *Street Fighter II*.



Most fighting games included one character with easy to spam moves for cheap victories.

@deadlock\_eire

Offering to clear a level of *Bubble Bobble* for someone in the chip shop just to get a free go.

@tohoscope1

Cheesing the first mission of *Space Crusade* (Amiga) by crushing the Chaos Dreadnought with the double doors. 🍷



## RETRO EZ

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\*\*Achieved via Manual Switching, to avoid conflict with Soft-Reset used on other cards

\*\*\*Product image is a Beta unit. Customers will receive a fully completed retail version



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# THIS WEEK IN RETRO



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for out of date tech

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# PIXELS 'N' POPCORN: VERSUS MODE

## - Mortal Kombat (1995) vs Mortal Kombat (2021)

**Film:** *Mortal Kombat*

**Released:** 1995

**Director:** Paul Anderson

**Starring:** Christopher Lambert, Robin Shou, Linden Ashby, Bridgette Wilson, Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa, Talisa Soto

**Film:** *Mortal Kombat*

**Released:** 2021

**Director:** Simon McQuoid

**Starring:** Lewis Tan, Jessica McNamee, Mehdad Brooks, Tadanobu Asano, Ludi Lin, Chin Han, Joe Taslim

**Blood! Impalements! Decapitations! Hearts and spinal columns being ripped out with, like, all stuff dripping off them! Yeah!**

Such is the appeal of the *Mortal Kombat* series of fighting games, which have been entertaining psychopaths across the globe for more than 30 years.

It was in 1992 that the original *Mortal Kombat* coin-op sent gamers gaga and made moral guardians' heads explode. With its strikingly realistic and uniquely atmospheric digitised graphics, novel controls and buckets of gore – including the ability to gruesomely murder defeated opponents – the game became a sensational worldwide hit for developer and publisher Midway. After conquering arcades, it was converted to just about every home system under the sun and



Christopher Lambert's portrayal of Raiden is one of the highlights of *Mortal Kombat* (1995). He's clearly having a grand old time as the avuncular deity.

sold mightily on all of them. Players loved its intense one-on-one biffage, its darkly fantastical storyline and characters, and its boundary-pushing ultraviolence.

*Mortal Kombat* inspired one of the earliest video game movie adaptations which, as you'd expect, took the form of a martial arts action fantasy adventure. By the time it bicycle-kicked its way into cinemas in 1995, audiences had seen and been thoroughly unimpressed by *Super Mario Bros.* (with Bob Hoskins) and *Street Fighter* (with Jean-Claude Van Damme), so there were doubts as to how well it would perform. In the event, *MK* garnered mixed reviews instead of an outright critical slaughtering, and earned more than six times its budget at the box office.

Despite this success, plans for an *MK* movie franchise were badly maimed after the 1997 sequel, *Mortal Kombat Annihilation*, turned out to be a big pile of rancid turkey giblets. Attempts to get another live-action film into production



Lewis Tan as Cole Young in *MK 2021*. Nicknamed "The Human Punching Bag" by a sleazy MMA promoter, the character is an effective audience surrogate, introducing us to the dangerous world of *Mortal Kombat* as he gets drawn into the machinations of Shang Tsung. Amusingly, given his propensity for taking punishment, Cole's "arcana" power turns out to be the ability to grow literal plot armour.

went nowhere for the best part of two decades, until Hollywood heavyweight James Wan signed on to produce a reboot for Warner Bros. Pictures. This resulted in the release of another flick named *Mortal Kombat* in 2021.

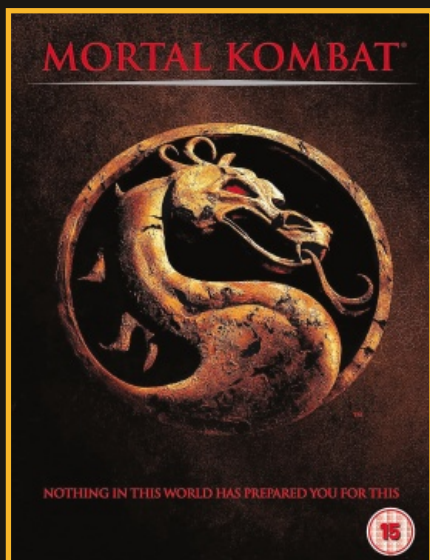
Where *MK 1995* eschewed graphic gore to get a lower age rating (PG-13 in the US) and thus make itself more accessible to the game's younger fans, *MK 2021* went full-on with the splatty carnage, earning an R rating from the MPAA. Even so, it ended up getting a similar response to its 1990s namesake, receiving decent write-ups from critics and doing respectably on the ticket sales front.

But which *Mortal Kombat* movie is the best? That, dear reader, is what we're here to discover. VERSUS MODE ACTIVATED!

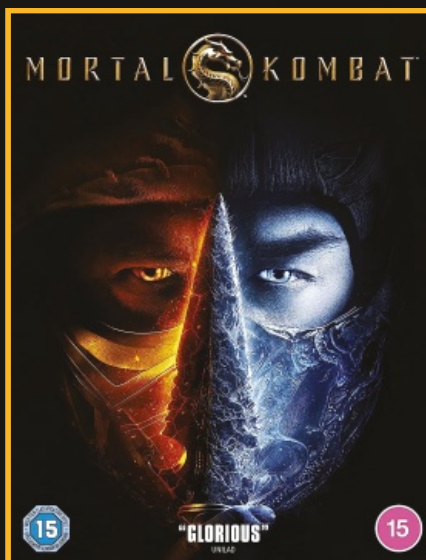
### INSERT COINS

Made for a relatively modest \$20m, *Mortal Kombat* (1995) looks fantastic, featuring terrific sets, striking locations and oodles of well-choreographed fight scenes. Based predominantly on the first coin-op, it captures the game's atmosphere perfectly – no mean achievement considering that it's almost totally devoid of blood. Not all its visual effects hold up today; the computer-animated Reptile looks like something fished out of Pixar's bins, and the expensive animatronic Goro looked pretty ropey even back in 1995, resembling a giant lumbering four-armed muppet rather than a lethally dangerous half-dragon warrior. Mostly, though, you can still see why cinemagoers liked it to the tune of \$122m.

*Mortal Kombat* (2021) draws inspiration from the numerous *MK* games released during the past three decades to tell an original story set within the same



When it comes to memorable logos, you have to admit that the classic *MK* dragon symbol is pretty gosh-darned stylish.



Sinister ninjas Scorpion and Sub-Zero play a bigger part in the story of *MK 2021* than they do in the first film, hence their appearance on the DVD cover.



universe, involving characters from various entries in the series and a brand new protagonist. Budgeted at \$55m, the film has a darker, grittier tone than the first, and it too boasts impressive production values and plenty of imaginatively-staged action, this time with gore splashing all over the shop.

*MK 2021* wasn't as profitable as its predecessor, but with a box office total of \$84m it was successful enough to garner a sequel, which is currently in production. Did it, then, outdo *MK 1995* as a cinematic experience? There's only one way to find out...

#### ROUND 1: FIGHT!

Watching these films back-to-back is a faintly bizarre experience, especially as a viewer in the UK where, due to the arcane practices of the BBFC, they share the same age rating: 15. This despite the fact that *MK 1995* is tonally akin to a big-budget episode of *Power Rangers*, and *MK 2021* has gallons of red stuff spraying up the walls from the opening scene onwards.

Of course, the main thing you want from a martial arts movie is tons of fun set piece fights, and both *Mortal Kombat*s deliver here. All the characters get their chance to shine, making entertaining use of their iconic moves from the games, and there are all kinds of magical goings-on to spice things up. It's hard to choose between them, but for me *MK 2021* just has the edge for sheer variety and its willingness to go all-out with the finishing moves. They're often quite a spectacle; I suspect the film only evaded an 18 certificate because the most extreme Fatalities are perpetrated against non-human characters...

#### MORTAL KOMBAT (2021) WINS!

#### ROUND 2: PLOT!

*MK 1995* follows the first game's fairly simple story. The dark dimension of Outworld is seeking to invade and conquer Earthrealm by winning *Mortal Kombat*, a mystical martial arts tournament, 10 consecutive times. Shaolin monk Liu Kang (Robin Shou), movie star Johnny Cage (Linden Ashby) and special forces officer Sonya Blade (Bridgette Wilson) are chosen to represent Earth in the latest contest, and must defeat the minions of evil sorcerer Shang Tsung (Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa) with guidance from thunder god Raiden (Christopher Lambert). Much thumpage occurs.

The 2021 film puts a different spin on things by having Shang Tsung (Chin Han) try to assassinate Earthrealm's warriors before the tournament begins, so he can claim the 10th victory by default. It introduces a new hero named Cole Young (Lewis Tan), a washed-up MMA fighter who has to help thwart the villain's plan. There's also a sub-plot about the Earthrealm fighters being able to utilise unique magical powers called arcana, and the movie ends with the latest *MK* tournament not having started yet, which is a bit odd. Much thumpage occurs nonetheless.

Ultimately, the simplicity of the first movie's plot works in its favour; it provides a structure to hang the fights on, and that's really all it needs to do. *MK 2021* occasionally gets bogged down with exposition, yet at the same time there are plot holes which you can't help feeling could have been patched up with a line or two of dialogue. Clumsy.

#### MORTAL KOMBAT (1995) WINS!

#### ROUND 3: ENT! (Entertainment value.)

A common criticism levelled at *Mortal Kombat* (1995) is that the acting isn't much cop, but I completely disagree. Y'see, the *MK* games, for all their gruesomeness, have always been distinctly tongue-in-cheek. They know how over-the-top they are, and they embrace the silliness with gusto, hence the inclusion of ridiculous secret stuff like the Friendship finishing moves and Babalities (where you transform your rival into a gurgling infant). The first film mirrors this irreverence with an unapologetically playful tone and some genuinely amusing gags, and I'd argue that the cast give pitch-perfect performances to bolster the liveliness of the enterprise.

*Mortal Kombat* (2021) may be darker in tone but, to its immense credit, it still has that all-important vein of jocularly running through it. Screenwriters Greg Russo and Dave Callaham and director Simon McQuoid do a deft job of balancing the more dramatic elements with moments of humour, and the cast help to maintain that balance admirably. There are a couple of jokes that made me laugh out loud, most notably the leg-sweeping bit with Liu Kang (Ludi Lin) and Kano (Josh Lawson), and even at its gnarliest the gore is never distressing because it always has a knowing wink behind it.

The sheer chutzpah with which *MK 2021* blends grittiness with snickersome fun is

By Matthew Smith

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soundcloud.com/matthewsmith2



*One of the neatest ideas in MK 1995 is that Scorpion's trademark spear ("GET OVER HERE!" You know the drill!) isn't a spear at all, but a weird metallic bitey creature that lives inside his hand. It's gleefully creepy.*

what ultimately gives it the edge over its predecessor, but make no mistake – both movies are heartily entertaining. As double features go, they're perfect partners.

#### MORTAL KOMBAT (2021) WINS! FRIENDSHIP!

#### CONTINUE? 10...9...8...

As mentioned above, a sequel to *Mortal Kombat* (2021) is in the works right now. Refreshingly simply entitled *Mortal Kombat 2*, it began shooting in June this year with McQuoid returning to direct and all the principal performers coming back too. Plus! Karl Urban is joining the cast as Johnny Cage. We await the film with cheery anticipation.

#### CHOOSE YOUR DESTINY

But wait! We're not done with the cinematic world of *Mortal Kombat* just yet. Join us next issue when we'll be delving into the *MK* animated movie universe, and exploring just what the blithering flip went wrong with *Mortal Kombat: Annihilation*. BRUTALITY! PA



*Goro as he appears in MK 2021. He's fully CG here, and although he gets less screen time than in the first movie, he's altogether more impressive.*





# Haiku OS

## - The best operating system you've probably never heard of!

YouTuber Tom Williamson from the Wi-Fi Sheep Tech Channel takes a look at this little known gem in the world of alternative operating systems.

### Introduction

If you're like me, and reading this article, then there is a good chance you are open to the idea of a global computing ecosystem that consists of more than just Microsoft Windows or Apple macOS.

You only have to look at *Pixel Addict's* sister magazine *Amiga Addict*, a whole print publication devoted to a computing world not dominated by Microsoft, Google or Apple, to realise this.

The issue with OS alternatives is that they are often relatively old, so lack many core functions required for modern daily driver use, with many also requiring expensive or obscure hardware to run on.

The resulting systems always seem to end up being hobbyist curiosities for a niche user group or market, and not something the average user who just wants to stream YouTube or do some online shopping is going to bother with. Many of these OS alternatives also struggle in the 21st century to do even simple tasks like copy and paste between applications or use

modern internet connections such as Wi-Fi.

However, there are a few exceptions.. such as an operating system which is 100% free, runs on your Intel or AMD based Mac or PC, supports Wi-Fi and Bluetooth connections, can actually stream that latest movie... and you might even want to use it for your day to day office work!

That operating system is called Haiku OS and it's rather brilliant!

### History

Haiku is actually a modern 32/64-bit fork of an original operating system called BeOS which appeared in the mid 1990s, created by Be Inc which was founded in 1990 by Jean-Louis Gassée, a former Apple executive.

Unlike so many alternatives, BeOS and later Haiku are not ports or flavours of Linux, they are standalone entities, similar to Amiga OS on PowerPC or RISC OS on ARM, although the OS does use a UNIX style command shell.

The original BeOS was designed to run on the Motorola/IBM PowerPC CPU architecture, the same used in the second generation Apple Power Mac, and later

post-Commodore Amiga systems.

For a short while between 1995 & 1997, Be Inc sold its own hardware in the form of the BeBOX desktop. This was powered by two PowerPC 603 CPUs clocked between 66MHz and 133MHz, and could run with up to 256MB of RAM, which was considered the top end for domestic desktop systems around the mid 1990s.

When new in 1995, BeBOX cost around \$1,600 USD, equivalent to about \$3,192 USD in 2023, so not cheap! It was mainly this cost and the fierce competition with ever cheaper IBM PC compatibles running MS-DOS or Windows that finally killed off BeBOX by early 1997.



An original mid-90s era BeBOX PowerPC tower system.



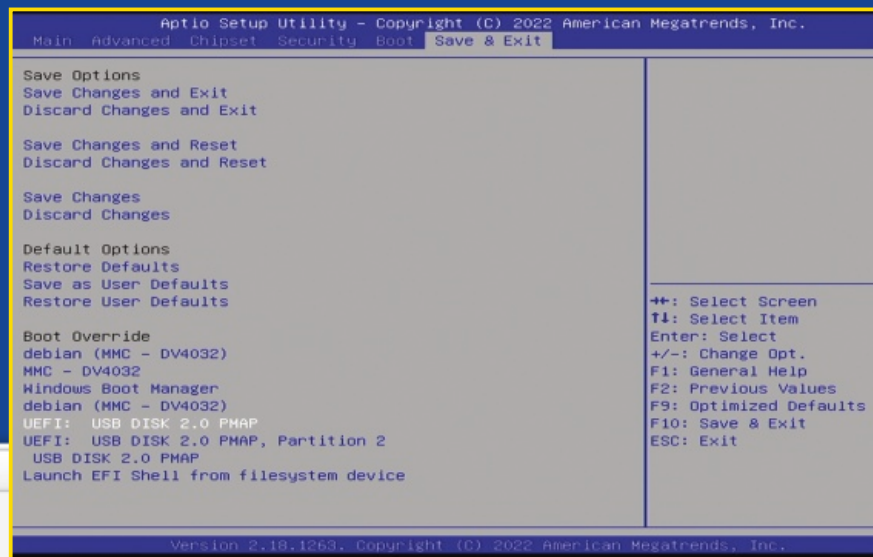
By Tom Williamson

YouTube.com/wifisheep

@Wifisheep



A 10 year old Acer Aspire One netbook running Haiku from an external USB flash drive.



The BIOS in most x86 PCs will allow you to boot from a USB drive, ignoring the OS on the main hard drive/SSD.

After 1997 BeOS relied on the small market share of licensed PowerPC Macintosh clones, as an alternative operating system to the official Apple System 7.x that the Macintosh used at that time.

In fact, with Apple's own sales in real trouble during the mid 1990s, the company even considered buying Be Inc and using an Apple rebranded BeOS as the official *next generation* operating system for Macintosh. This as we know didn't happen, and Apple bought NeXT Computer Inc. with its Unix based Next Step operating system, which was then rebranded as Mac OS X and today is still used under the macOS brand.

In buying NeXT, Apple also bought Steve Jobs back into Apple as its CEO in 1997. This however was bad news for BeOS, as one of the first things Jobs did was kill the licensed Mac clones, leaving BeOS without a hardware platform.

Undeterred, the team at Be Inc ported BeOS over from Motorola/IBM PowerPC to Intel/AMD x86, the same chip architecture used in all the cheap IBM PC clones, basically any computer that could run Microsoft Windows at that time.

However, as with the BeBOX two years earlier, the dominance of Windows and even the small but growing Linux user base on x86 still proved too much for BeOS and it was sold to Palm, Inc (the creators of the Palm Pilot PDA) in 2001.

### Haiku – Rise Of A BeOS Phoenix

Since 2001, a lot has changed in the computing world. We've seen the rise of the retro and hobbyist sectors and with that, a renewed interest in otherwise forgotten or little known projects from the recent past.

One of these projects that rose like a phoenix, was a fork of BeOS called Haiku, which legally uses the same source code base of BeOS, looks and works almost identically, but is updated and supported for use on modern x86 systems, including multi-core 64-bit PC CPU architecture.

For a free, open source project, Haiku is very impressive, its size is measured in megabytes, not gigabytes! It runs extremely fast, even on older PC hardware, and the OS has good support for hardware and software, including drivers for video and sound cards, Bluetooth and Wi-Fi and networking devices.

Haiku can also run on almost any x86 PC hardware manufactured in the last 20 years, this includes Intel era Macintosh systems. Which is slightly ironic considering BeOS's history with Apple!

### Hardware

Haiku is available in both 32 and 64-bit versions on a wide range of PC & some Mac hardware. If you want to try it out for yourself without installing it permanently, you can! Via a bootable CD/DVD disc or a USB

flash pen drive or data stick.

The OS can be downloaded from one of the official mirror sites at: [www.haiku-os.org/get-haiku/](http://www.haiku-os.org/get-haiku/)

Both the 32 or 64-bit images download as an ISO file, this can be burnt to a bootable CD-R or DVD-R using your system's inbuilt software, or for this article I flashed the ISO to a USB pen drive using Balena Etcher <https://etcher.balena.io/> which is free for Windows, Mac and Linux.

Note: If using a USB flash or pen drive, it will need to be at least 4GB in size and will be wiped and reformatted by Etcher when writing the Haiku ISO disc image. After completion the USB drive won't show up on your Mac or PC again as a mountable device because it has now been formatted to the BeOS filing system which Windows and macOS can't read. ►



Haiku's main boot startup screen.



## Booting Up

For this article I mainly used x86 PCs as they contain a system BIOS and so in most cases are a little easier to get Haiku working, as opposed to x86 Macs which require a little more setup work, which is outside the scope of this article.

Your USB drive or CD/DVD needs to be inserted into your target x86 PC, and the machine rebooted. On power cycle, you need to enter your PC's BIOS settings screen, this is normally done by holding down F1, F2, F12, ESC or Enter depending on the age and make of your system.

From the DOS terminal style menu, select boot options and choose to boot from USB or CD/DVD, then select reboot to restart if the BIOS does not offer to do this automatically.

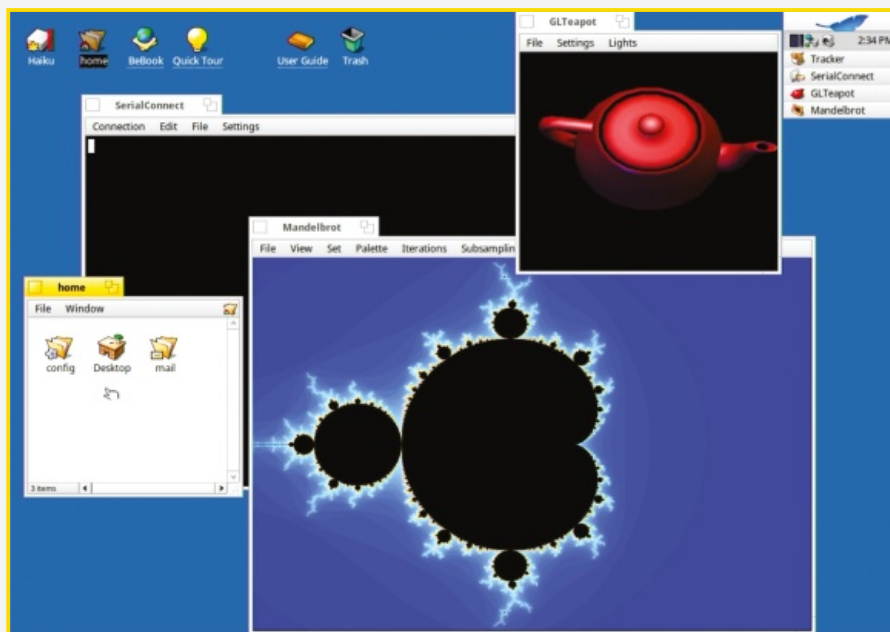
This should restart your PC and boot Haiku as a 'live disc' from the CD/DVD or USB drive.

Note: If running from CD/DVD the boot process could be quite slow.

Once you see the Haiku letters appear on screen the OS should load.

First time users will be asked to select keyboard layout and language, with the option to install Haiku or to try it out. If you don't intend to wipe your host OS off your machine, then select the later option. This will forward you to the working blue Haiku desktop, without making any changes to your main PC OS or system setup.

If you're using Haiku via a writeable USB device, such as a pen drive or stick, then you can make changes to Haiku and it will remember your settings and even installed applications just like it was running on your system's main hard drive.



The Haiku desktop, it might have still have its 90s BeOS looks, but this OS is very capable in our modern Wi-Fi enabled 64-bit multi-core CPU world!

## Software Support

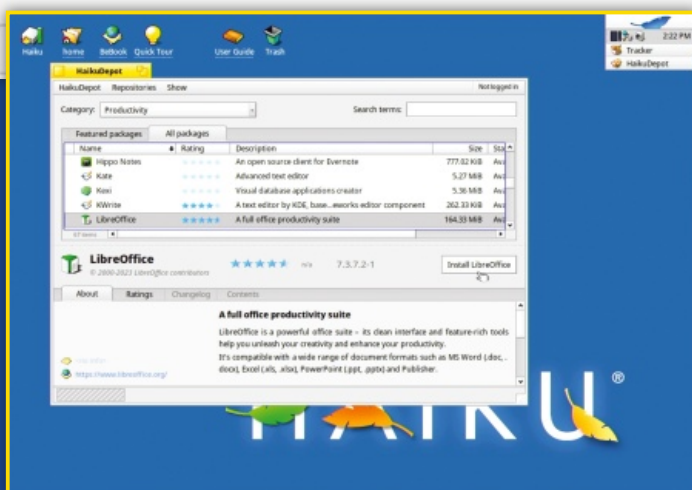
The OS has a number of excellent applications and ports, such as: *LibreOffice*, *Arduino IDE*, *DOSBox*, *Web Positive* and *Net Surf*, and even *OpenShot Video Editor*! These are all available via the Haiku Depot which acts as the OS's App Store. All the software does appear to be free at time of writing.

The Haiku platform also supports a very comprehensive library of games, with classics such as *Wolfenstein 3D* and *Doom*, though to some wonderful ports of classic Apple iMac bundled game release titles from developer Pangea Software, including *Mighty Mike* (known as *PowerPete* in Europe), *Nanosaur*, *Ottomatic* and the insanely cute *Bugdom*. These classic Mac era games work really well and have been updated in most cases to support modern widescreen aspect ratios, HD and even 4K screen resolutions.

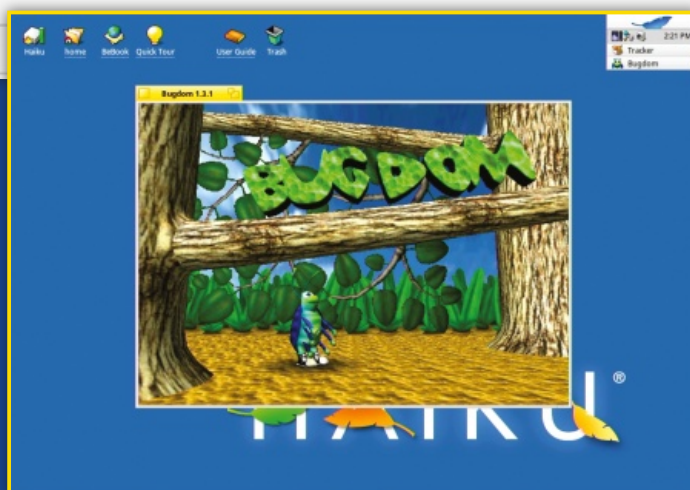
Haiku's main user interface - although a little stuck in the 1990s, as it is almost identical to BeOS in look, feel and operation - is still very intuitive to use. So if you're a Windows, macOS or Linux desktop user, you'll figure out Haiku in no time!

For me, what really sells Haiku is it's incredibly low barrier to entry, no obscure hardware, subscriptions or expensive software licences are necessary. All you really need is an x86 PC manufactured within the last 20 years and a USB stick or blank CD-R/DVD-R disc to get started.

Despite officially still being in beta, Haiku, with its strong multimedia support and solid ports of well known productivity software and entertainment titles, really could be used as a Windows replacement, so very much an alternative modern PC daily driver! 🐛



Haiku Depot is the OS's app store, allowing the download and installation of programs such as the popular multi-platform LibreOffice suite.

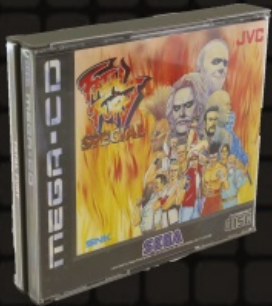


Bugdom from Pangea Software. A port from the Macintosh of a late-90s classic 3D game.



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# TEMPLEMAN'S TREASURES

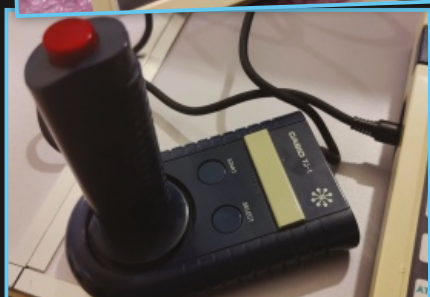
- We are shifting focus away from Europe this month, and looking to Japan

The Japanese market was quite buoyant in the 1980s, but just like here in the UK and in Europe, they had their fair share of successes and failures. This wouldn't be Templeman's Treasures if I decided to talk about the successes... would it!? So, let's take a look at one of my favourite underdogs. The fantastic Casio PV-2000.

The PV-2000 is a 1983 machine. It used a Z80 processor, and boasted a 'massive' 4KB of RAM. It also had 16KB of video RAM and could display up to 16 colours on screen. Sound was courtesy of a simple PSG (sound generator). Even by 1983, these are not great specs. But the worst is still to come. You may remember that I have mentioned terrible keyboards in the past, and you may even remember that I have stated a few times that the worst isn't the ZX80/81, or even the Aquarius.. In my opinion this 'honour' belongs to the Robotron Z9001/KC87 (a machine I will discuss in a later issue). However, that was pre Casio PV-2000 ownership.

The keyboard on this Oric sized machine is truly awful. It's a flat membrane type, similar to the Sinclair ZX81.. but FAR worse. If you are lucky enough to own a PV-2000, you probably no longer own the original keyboard. The plastic overlay did not age well, and tended to crumble to pieces. Mine was no exception, it literally turned to brittle dust. Making a new keyboard is not that difficult, as it is purely a plastic sheet with carbon paint on one side to make contact with the

*Just look at that awesomely terrible keyboard. Wonderful isn't it?!*



*The PV-2000 joystick. Sporting all those lovely buttons.*



*Loading up Front Line.*

motherboard. There is almost zero feedback from the keys. This makes typing anything... interesting.

Was this lovely looking machine a success? Ha ha! No, of course not! It was a full face lead balloon. It was a massive flop. Which (as you probably know by now) is exactly why it is in my collection. It is a fabulous underdog. Only 11 games were ever produced for the machine, and they were all on cartridge. I only have one game at the moment, as they sell for very high prices.

But what is this underdog like to actually use? Well, to be honest it's



*The game in action is Front Line. Top fire to shoot, bottom fire for grenade.*

really good! I know I know, I just told you how horrendous the keyboard is. But this adds to its charm. Without the absolutely terrible keyboard, it wouldn't be the PV-2000. In a way, it's a trait that the Mattel Aquarius shares. If these machines weren't unique in their own way, then they would just be yet another 1980s micro. The Casio PV-2000 is definitely *not* just another 1980s micro. Even with that keyboard, the machine is nice to use. You can just about get used to the lack of feedback from the keyboard and start playing around with the built in BASIC. It's not a great version of BASIC to be fair, and with only 4KB of RAM, you only get around 2KB for your BASIC program, so don't expect



*Newly fitted keyboard.*



By Roy Templeman



to be coding *Warp Factor* anytime soon.

Fortunately extra memory was added to most of the game cartridges. I have a game called *Front Line*. It is basically a *Commando* style game. I love it. The sprites are colourful, fast moving and well animated. The sound is acceptable and of course being on cartridge means instant loading. Picture quality is excellent (as it is with most Japanese machines).

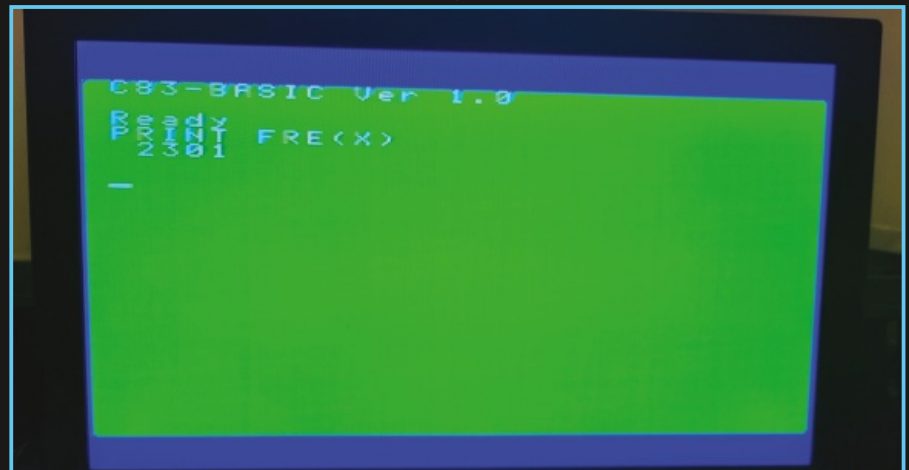
I should hate this machine, but I don't. It's mesmerising. Unfortunately the PV-2000 doesn't support the Atari standard for joysticks or ports – no DE/DB9 here! Casio opted for a proprietary standard that uses a mini DIN socket, and the joysticks are unique to this unit. Luckily I have the PV-2000 joystick. Is it any good? What do you think?! BUT.. it does have two separate fire buttons that are independent from each other. During *Front Line* for example, the top button is for firing the gun, and the second fire button is for grenades. Awesome. The joystick sports start and select buttons. And it has a brilliant trick. There is a slider switch on

the edge of the joystick that swaps the fire buttons around! Fantastic! So now my grenades are launched from the top fire button, and my gun is the flat fire button on the base. Absolute genius.

Of course it was built to a low budget, and was clearly aimed at the first computer market. I think it's a shame that it flopped.

But then again, if it wasn't a rare underdog, then I wouldn't be discussing it! To summarise, it's a quirky non standard machine with almost no RAM, almost no games and probably the most poorly designed keyboard of all time. It's terrible. I love it.

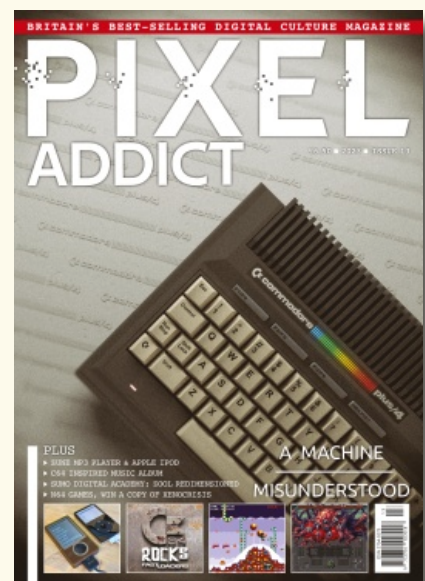
**Treasures Rating: 2 (very rare)**



2KB of RAM means you will need to be an efficient BASIC coder!

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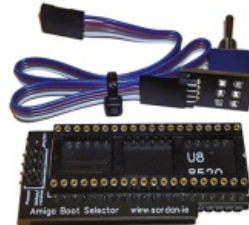
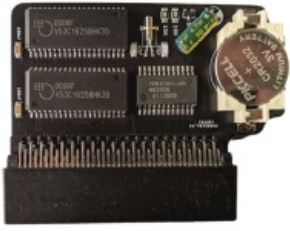
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# THE POWER MAC G4 CUBE

## - Apple's beautiful failure

By Huxley Dunsany

[www.retroroadshow.org](http://www.retroroadshow.org)

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[www.youtube.com/TheRetroRoadshow](http://www.youtube.com/TheRetroRoadshow)



When Steve Jobs returned to Apple via their acquisition of NeXT Inc, he found himself running a company which had lost its way. Far from their early years of Apple II-fueled hypergrowth and lacking the stylistic verve of the early Macintosh era, Apple was struggling to justify its own existence. In addition to a badly outdated and notoriously unstable operating system, Apple's product line was an unfocused, confusing mess. While Apple was developing some advanced technologies including early experiments with multiprocessor Macs and the groundbreaking Newton handheld platform, their lack of product focus and moribund industrial design had steadily eroded their most valuable asset: their fundamental *coolness*. Visually, Apple's least-powerful and most-powerful computers all looked alike, with a seemingly endless succession of boring beige desktop computers sporting inscrutable names which left customers and journalists cold.

Working closely with talented industrial designer Jony Ive, Jobs and his closest compatriots were relentlessly focused on bringing simplicity, innovation and a sense of cool back to the beleaguered company. The first major result of this effort was the iMac, a playful, translucent all-in-one desktop computer that signalled the return of style and excitement to Apple. Released in 1998, the iMac was a massive hit, revitalising Apple and spawning a translucent-plastic aesthetic which quickly came to define Apple's product line and inspired countless imitators.

Just a few months after the debut of the consumer-oriented iMac, Apple introduced this new

look to their professional desktops with the 1999 release of the Power Macintosh G3 tower. Clad in eye-catching translucent plastic, the "Blue & White" Power Mac looked like nothing else on the market, combining remarkable looks with a powerful architecture. Apple's demanding professional customers loved the beautiful design and upgradeability, and Apple responded by repeatedly refining and iterating the design. By August 1999, the G3 processor in the original "Blue & White" had been superseded by the more powerful G4.

Perhaps seeking to emphasise the more serious use-cases of their pro-level customers, the Power Mac G4 introduced a more refined and elegant "Graphite" aesthetic, moving away from the colourful G3. This change brought a more businesslike vibe to Apple's professional line, which was soon echoed by the "Graphite" iBook G3 and later the "Titanium" PowerBook G4 laptops. However, despite the relative popularity and compelling performance of the Power Mac G4, Jobs and Ive were convinced that a significant percentage of their professional customers wanted something else entirely: a smaller, quieter, more elegant workstation.

Announced by Jobs at the Macworld Expo in July 2000, the Power Macintosh G4 Cube was a brand-new concept, combining the *"awesome power of the Power Mac G4 with the desktop elegance, the silence and the miniaturisation learned from the*



*As a professional desktop workstation from the early 2000's, the G4 Cube included all the ports a demanding user might expect to find, including Ethernet, FireWire, USB, dialup modem, power, Apple Display Connector and VGA. Note also the tiny reset and interrupt buttons in the corner to the left of the ADC and VGA ports.*

iMac. "The new system condensed many of the capabilities of a hulking Power Mac G4 into a visually stunning computer measuring only 8" on each side - a shocking degree of *bleeding edge* miniaturisation. As Jobs proudly bragged during his Macworld keynote presentation, the new machine performed like a full-size G4 tower, but measured barely 1/4 the size and didn't feature an internal cooling fan, relying instead on cleverly-engineering convection cooling.

Job's obsession with passively cooled (and thus extremely quiet) computers was nothing new - he'd brought similar demands to previous Apple products before, sometimes successfully (the original Macintosh) and sometimes disastrously (the Apple III). Similarly, the G4 Cube wasn't the first cube-shaped computer Jobs had launched. The original NeXT Computer (later renamed the NeXT Cube) released

in 1988 also sported a cubical design, although that machine's black enclosure and hard-edged brutality bore little

*An original, unmodified 450MHz Power Mac G4 Cube to the right, and to the left a heavily-modified G4 Cube featuring a 1.3GHz dual-processor, 3rd-party enclosure, SSD storage, AirPort wireless card, internal fan and upgraded power circuitry.*



Power Mac G4 Cube





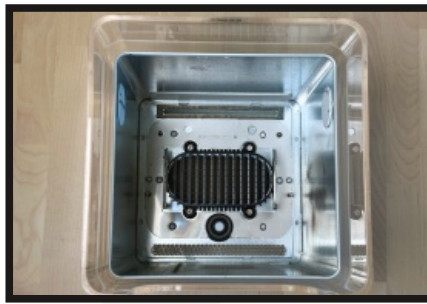
## The Mouse That Roared

When Apple launched the original iMac in 1998, it quickly became one of their most beloved designs ever... and introduced one of their more hated accessories. Included with every iMac G3 was a perfectly round pointing device informally dubbed the "puck mouse", in reference to its similar size and shape to a hockey puck. While its aesthetic playfully matched the rounded iMac, users quickly found that it was difficult to tell which end of the mouse was which, resulting in a disorienting sensation when the on-screen arrow failed to move in the same direction as the mouse. The introduction of the more pill-shaped Pro Mouse alongside the G4 Cube heralded the end of the much-hated puck mouse.

resemblance to the smaller, art deco-inspired G4 Cube.

Reflecting the popularity of the drop-door design of the Power Mac G4 towers which offered fast and easy access to the internals, the G4 Cube took an even more extreme approach to upgrades. Underside was a recessed, spring-loaded handle - the user only needed to lift the handle to remove the inner core of the system, providing access to the motherboard, internal storage, and all other electronic components of the machine. In true Jobs plus Ives style, the outer simplicity of the G4 Cube hid the origami-like complexity contained within.

While Jobs' on-stage introduction of the G4 Cube emphasised its supposed mix of computational power and aesthetic



*With the densely-packed inner core of the G4 Cube removed, the outer shell is left empty.*

elegance, early reviews were mixed. Many reviewers agreed that the computer was remarkably beautiful - for instance, *Macworld* magazine's initial review described the G4 Cube as "...an ice sculpture with a block of platinum trapped inside. It is a thing of beauty."

Similar praise was offered for the various accessories that launched alongside the G4 Cube, including a translucent keyboard, the Pro Mouse (Apple's first optical pointing device) and especially the stunning CRT Studio Display. Much like the G4 Cube, the matching CRT monitor was itself a remarkable achievement in material science and industrial design. Just as the G4 Cube harkened back to the NeXT Cube while establishing its own aesthetic, the Studio Display offered an interesting echo of the NeXT MegaPixel Display, with both monitors seeming to float on elegant stands. Where the NeXT MegaPixel Display relied on a heavy metal stand and intricately-designed hinge, the see-through bulk of the Studio Display appeared to hover over a translucent base resembling a glass jellyfish. The Studio Display borrowed another trick from the earlier NeXT systems: it needed only a single cable to draw



*The Pro Mouse was Apple's first optical mouse, eventually shipped with every Power Mac G4 Cube.*

power, video, and USB from the G4 Cube.

Despite the near-universal praise for its clever design and eye-catching looks, early reactions to the G4 Cube were decidedly mixed. Most initial reviews commented on the system's middling performance and limited upgradeability when compared to comparably-priced Power Mac towers. The primary technical concerns found in most early G4 Cube reviews tended to fall into a few common categories:

- **Upgradeability:** In an era when a Power Mac G4 tower offered dual G4 CPUs, three PCI slots for additional expansion (audio cards, faster networking, etc.), four RAM slots and up to five internal drives, the G4 Cube only offered a single CPU, no PCI slots at all, only three RAM slots and room for a single hard disk.
- **Performance:** Likely due to a mix of size constraints and the overheating risks of passive heat management, the G4 Cube had a single CPU and lower-speed internal hard disk. While these limitations would have been less noticeable to typical consumers, as a flagship model in the Power Mac series, the G4 Cube was explicitly marketed to professional users with demanding workflows - the same customers who typically rely on expandability and upgradeability the most.
- **Cost:** A fully kitted-out 500MHz Power Mac G4 Cube could easily exceed the cost of a faster, more upgradable Power Mac tower, without offering nearly as many potential upgrades. From a cost versus benefits perspective, Apple was making a bet that Pro users would be eager to buy a smaller, quieter, prettier machine with less upgradeability and lower performance, instead of a larger, less pretty machine with more raw power and more room for future expansion.
- **Immature design:** Unlike the Power Mac G4 towers which were largely iterations and refinements of earlier designs, the G4 Cube was an entirely new design, and as with any new platform, there were quirks and growing pains. Chief among these



*The Pro Mouse shipped with every Power Mac G4 Cube, and was Apple's first optical mouse. The Pro Mouse eventually became standard across all Apple desktop computers, replacing the much-criticized "puck mouse" that shipped with the original iMac G3.*



*The Apple Pro Mouse uses an optical sensor which glows red when in use, which from certain angles evokes the murderous "HAL 9000" computer from "2001: A Space Odyssey."*



were the touch-sensitive power button on the top of the machine (early G4 Cube owners shared stories of cats inadvertently powering the machines on and off!), and “flow lines” - flaws in the transparent outer case which looked like cracks from certain angles. These flow lines were especially damaging to the fledgling product, given how much of its perceived value was directly tied to its design.

In a pattern that echoed the launch of the original Macintosh in 1984, the G4 Cube was a critical darling, widely admired for its groundbreaking design and near-silent operation, but its limited upgradeability and high perceived costs took an immediate toll. Less than three months after the system launched, Steve Jobs was forced to address G4 Cube’s stagnant sales during a quarterly meeting with investors. While other factors had contributed to Apple’s weak financial results for the quarter (including changes to their educational sales model), Jobs largely blamed Apple’s lower-than-expected earnings on poor sales of the G4 Cube. Hoping to boost sales, Apple worked to eliminate the flow lines from the G4 Cube’s shell, improved the touch-sensitive power button, and uncharacteristically hinted at faster, lower-priced models to come while offering \$300 rebates for current models.

Unfortunately, these efforts to boost sales of the G4 Cube were not successful, and it was discontinued (or “put on ice,” to quote Apple’s unusual phrasing) barely a year after introduction, after only selling an estimated 150,000 systems in total - far below Apple’s projections. Nevertheless, despite its failure as a viable entry into Apple’s portfolio of professional-level systems, the G4 Cube left a fascinating and largely-positive legacy.

As an example of *Millenium Era* industrial design, the G4 Cube is almost without equal. The craftsmanship that went into the machine and its accessories have earned it permanent exhibition at several museums of modern art, and it appeared in the backgrounds of numerous

### The Future Was Flat

Although the CRT Studio Display remains one of Apple’s most beautiful hardware designs ever, the launch of the G4 Cube also coincided with the unveiling of two aesthetically-matched LCD monitors. The 15” LCD Studio Display could be purchased for \$999, while the stunning 22” Cinema Display was priced at an eye-watering \$3,999 - over \$7,000 in 2023 when adjusted for inflation.



*The interior of the G4 Cube is a marvel of three-dimensional engineering, with all the major components of the system folded together around a central heatsink. Apple revisited this concept in 2013 with the cylindrical Mac Pro.*



*With the G4 Cube set upside-down and the handle extended, the entire core of the system can be lifted out with a single hand.*

films and TV shows. The uniqueness has also earned the G4 Cube an extremely loyal fan base of die-hard users, many of whom enjoy finding ways to expand the system far beyond its original speed and capabilities. This passion for performance-boosting the “barely-upgradeable” G4 Cube even led to a brief cottage industry of speciality upgrades for the system, including larger (and thus cooler-running) enclosures, modified graphics cards, faster processors (some capable of running 3-5 times faster than a stock Cube), more robust power supplies and more.

Ultimately, the G4 Cube was an important and highly-influential product, even if its sales never matched Apple’s expectations. Steve Jobs and his team may have badly misjudged the market’s desire for a tiny, silent, beautiful computer in the early 2000s, but this does not mean that such a system could *never* be successful. Just four years after the G4 Cube was “put

on ice”, Apple introduced the Mac Mini, a diminutive desktop computer primarily aimed at customers who already owned a display and accessories and just wanted to upgrade their Mac (or switch from a PC). In 2022, Apple introduced the Mac Studio, a desktop system embodying the spirit of the G4 Cube: it is small, silent, elegantly minimalist, and appeals to Pro-level users who need more power than a consumer desktop but without the expandability and higher cost of a Mac Pro tower. As noted blogger John Gruber wrote upon the 20th anniversary of the G4 Cube’s release, “*The Cube was a worthy failure, deserving of our utmost praise in hindsight. Powerful computers needed to get smaller, quieter, and more attractive. The Cube pushed the state of the art forward.*” Thankfully, millions of users today can benefit from the fascinating, painful lesson of the G4 Cube, a computer which was quite literally too beautiful for this world. 摺



*When the G4 Cube was released, Apple was beginning the difficult transition from the old macOS platform to the more modern, NeXTSTEP-derived Mac OS X. As such, the G4 Cube can boot natively into either operating system, and (if properly configured) can run MacOS (aka “Classic”) within Mac OS X sessions.*



# NORTH EAST RETRO GAMING (NERG) 2023

- Paul travels north to check out a new addition to the show

A weekend in North East England has always been a great get away. Known for fantastic nightlife, friendly folk, Newcastle Brown Ale, oh and of course NERG!

The event took place over two days and various stalls were selling games, toys, handmade artwork and some very nice cakes and fudge (I could have gone crazy with these!) Game prices seemed reasonable - luckily prices have steadied and in some cases dropped over the last 18 months. I managed to show willpower and not buy anything gaming wise - although a pile of *untested* Nintendo DSi consoles for £5 each as well as various faulty PS2s would have tempted me more if I had repair skills.

This year had the highest number of pinball tables featured yet, show organiser Phil Murphy informed me that 56 were packed into the venue. It was great seeing so many classics based on *Indiana Jones*, *The Walking Dead*, *Bram Stoker's Dracula* and more. All these welcomed eager pinball wizards (and apprentices). Arcade cabinets were a mixture of old favourites such as *Street Fighter 2* and *Battle Zone*. There were plenty of stand out cabs too, including *Deluxe Afterburner*, *Outrun* and for any sharpshooters the *Virtua Cop* and *Lethal Enforcers* games were there too.

This year's NERG did something different, as two guests had been invited along for a talk; this was a big deal as NERG in previous years focused on stalls, arcade cabinets and pinball tables. Walter Day (founder of Twin Galaxies who archive arcade game high scores) and Billy Mitchell (world record holder on several games) both agreed to come over from America to discuss their careers and claimed to be happy to discuss anything asked.



*This seller was getting rid of his SEGA collection!*

In regards to Billy, there had been claims "he was difficult to talk to", "He'll walk out or sue you if you ask anything he doesn't like." With allegations some of his gaming high scores weren't legit, people wanted to discuss it and luckily he did. The talk was hosted by Lindsey Jordan - no stranger to events after appearing at many comic-cons and wrestling shows as a host. You'll find more from Lindsey on the next page.

I expected Billy to be difficult when it came to questions - but the opposite was true. He discussed the score allegations, his early arcade memories and even his hot sauce range.

After a brief interval it was over to Walter to take over as host. For over a decade various people involved in the games industry or the close community have been nominated each year for a Walter Day Trading Card. This year, yours truly made the list to have my own card and certificate. I have focused on preserving magazine memories and interviewing games writers since 2016 with the Maximum Power Up podcast and continues today in the Addict magazines.

So after a speech and also hearing from the other individuals being celebrated, it was almost the



*In the evening Billy streamed his attempt to play a perfect Pac-Man game.*

end of day one of the show. I know it may sound arrogant on my part but it really was a big deal for me as it helps push me to improve.

After the event there was an afterparty held at Four Quarters Arcade Bar in Newcastle city centre. Billy Mitchell was in attendance to attempt a perfect Pac-Man game live on Twitch, commentary (and game tips) came from fellow Pac-Man superstar player, Jon Stoodley - the first European who achieved a perfect score. However I do want to point out as a magazine collector the decor of the walls in the bar of old magazines ripped up to make a "retro montage" was heartbreaking!

All in all however, a fantastic event and trip up North and we'll see what 2024 brings.



*I grabbed a pic with Walter, Jon Stoodley and Billy. Safe to say these three are better than I am at games!*



*Keepsakes and merchandise from the event.*



## LINDSEY JORDAN INTERVIEW

**How do you prepare to interview two of the most well known names in arcade gaming?**

When I was asked to host the Q&A with Billy and Walter by Phil from NERG I was excited and terrified in equal measures. I've interviewed quite a number of guests during Comic-Cons in the past with Unleashed Events and Contract Entertainment, but Billy has to have been the most notorious and nerve wracking guest I've ever worked with.

I had done a LOT of research before the interview, I'd only seen snippets of one interview previously with Billy and it didn't go well so I wanted to make sure I could answer any questions he put back to me.

**Both Walter and Billy have very different personalities. As the host, how did you plan to adapt to this?**

I met Billy and Walter the evening before the event and Billy had told me that he doesn't do interviews and his exact words, "you do NOT want to interview me" made the nerves I had turn into gut wrenching fear. Although he was an absolute gentleman, he has the energy of someone that is formidable.

I had told him that I was going to ask some uncomfortable questions, that there was a lot that people wanted to know and that if I didn't ask then the speculation wouldn't end. Billy told me that I had best done my research. I did offer to run through some of the questions in advance but Billy had said no, he wanted it to be real and raw which is exactly what it needed to be.

What I found was a lack of actual evidence on a lot of the rumours. You can get lost in the cycle of hearsay and there is a lot of negative press whenever Billy's name is mentioned, it took a lot to find what was needed.

**You mentioned that Billy didn't want to see the questions beforehand. After the talk did you get any feedback from him?**

The interview was scheduled to last an hour but the flow of it and the concise answers that both Walter and Billy gave meant we almost hit two hours.

The nerves didn't leave at all during the talk, I wanted to start things light so it felt a bit more relaxed before I hit the harder questions. Both Billy and Walter loved sharing stories about where it all began.

The second hour we explored the



*Throughout the two hour talk Billy gave the audience some interesting insights.*

rumours of video submissions of his high scores, how the high scores were recorded, the sad passing of Apollo Legend and the current case with Karl Jobst, Billy was incredibly open and honest, saying at one point that a lot of what he had said he hadn't discussed publicly anywhere else.

Billy praised me for doing my research and thanked me for the interview. I think I must have thanked him and Walter at least 20 times, they were both so wonderful to talk to.

**How did you find the weekend in general? Have you previously visited NERG?**

My time with both Billy and Walter was amazing, Walter has definitely become one of my favourite guests of all time, he is so unbelievably kind, courteous, sweet and welcoming. As for Billy, as much as it's not what most want to believe, he is a true gentleman, shaking



*After the talk came the trading card presentation.*

hands with everyone he meets and was fantastically warm and open.

I've worked with Phil and NERG for a few years now at other events, but this is the first time I'd been free to attend the actual event myself and it eclipsed expectations!

I'm a Sega Girl (Dreamcast being my favourite), so I loved having time on the consoles. I am a huge fan of *Marvel vs Capcom* and *House of The Dead 2*, I spent A LOT of time on both this weekend. 🎮

*Lindsey wasn't shy in asking a few tough questions.*



*Just some of the recipients of the 2023 trading cards.*



# GAMES, MAGAZINES, ACTION!

- Paul gets some insight to some of his favourite 90s magazines

As we know computer magazines used to be a huge market! Each system often had several titles to choose from. Paul spoke to Alex Lee; a man who spent a decade helping bring us many of the mags we read.



Looking at the T-shirt, Alex has great music taste.

**What were some of your earliest gaming memories?**

I remember when *Space Invaders*, *Defender*, *Asteroids* and everything else first came to the UK. I was about 10 or 11 years old. The newsagent at the bottom of my street soon caught onto the coin-op boom and it wasn't long before he had four arcade machines crammed into the shop. He wasn't daft. You can guess where most of the money from my paper round went by the time I was old enough to have one! Computing-wise, a mate had a BBC Micro, so we used to play *Elite* on that. Despite the wire-frame graphics it still has to go down as an all-time great due to its open-ended and non-linear nature. I had a ZX81

and a couple of handheld games – one of which was *Kevin Keegan's Electronic Soccer* and the other a very rudimentary *Space Invaders* style thing which took six AA batteries. Both games were just red dots or dashes on a black background, but I played them to death. I can't honestly remember a great deal about the ZX81, other than always waiting for games to load from my cassette player.

**How did you become involved with working on games magazines?**

I saw an ad in the *Manchester Evening News* for a production assistant on a weekly games mag called *Games-X*, I applied for it and got the job along with two or three others. Prior to this, I and a mate produced a couple of issues of a fanzine which had been stocked in HMV and a sci-fi store called *Timeslip* which I took along to the interview. I'd also worked on the University mag, so while my Social Science degree wasn't exactly relevant, I did have a love of creating magazines from scratch and I was keen to pursue a career in some kind of journalism.

**Your early days were as production editor on *ST Action* and *Amiga Action*. What did this role involve?**

Largely reminding the writers that they had deadlines to hit and that the pages wouldn't magically set themselves, no matter how much they played *Sensible Soccer*! Sub-editing and re-writing copy, proof-reading, keeping image libraries, explaining the difference between 'amount of', 'number of', 'there/their' and all that kind of stuff. Helping the layout

artists by supplying captions, headers and so on. Putting house style sheets together with rules for what type of punctuation was acceptable, how game and brand names were written, how numbers were expressed (one to ten in words, 11 onwards in numerals or whatever) and so on.

**Did Hugh Gollner (*Games-X* Editor) help you out at all at the start? Other staff members, Nick Clarkson and Steve Merrett have stated how he was keen on a young but passionate team who breathed gaming.**

Not that I remember in all honesty, although *Games-X* was his brainchild and he did subsequently offer me a job at Maverick Magazines, which was a shrewd move on his part.

**You said you were involved with *Games-X*. How did you find the weekly schedule?**

I enjoyed it to be honest, as it was my first paid job in journalism. I didn't necessarily think it was the best concept for a mag, but I certainly didn't hate it. As I was a production assistant at the time, I wasn't under pressure to deliver my own copy, it was more about helping everyone else.

**You spent a few issues on *Control* magazine for the SNES over at the newly launched Maverick Magazines. How did this move from Europress happen?**

Hugh offered me the production editor's job on an as yet untitled new Super Nintendo mag (which was launched as *Control*) on more money than I was



Early on Amiga Action's layout kept up with the very best-designed magazines.



Alex spent a short time at the newly launched Maverick Magazines.



Any excuse to show off one of our Ed's fave mags.





A must buy for Game Boy owners and it was cheap!

being paid at Europress. A no brainer really, plus I liked the idea of working on a brand new title for a foetal company from the very start. I felt I could contribute more and make a greater impact on a new publication than one that had 'baggage'.

You returned to Europress to work on two mags. *GB Action* was a great mag. How did you find your time on GBA as there was no proper rival mag covering handhelds?

I was head-hunted back to Europress to work on *Super Action* as production editor. Simon Kirrane and Frank O'Connor both subsequently left a few months down the line so it wasn't too long before I took over as deputy editor, then editor. While I was editor of *Super Action*, I was offered the job as editor on *GB Action* as well. The deadlines were a fortnight apart, so I figured 'what the heck? More money too of course. I really enjoyed *GB Action*. We couldn't make a big deal of the screenshots as they were all pixelated and mono, but we made up for that with some solid design, decent writing and bold ideas.

*GBA* also featured a lot of non gaming content such as features on film, *Laser Quest*, *Manga* etc. Can you remember if this went down well with the team? Did the request to cover it come from Europress?

It was my idea. This was largely down to the fact that there weren't enough new games coming out to fill the mag, plus it gave us all something else to get our teeth into. The team were fine with it as



Manga was huge in the early 90s and mags were more than happy to include it.

far as I know. It was a new challenge for us all and most of us were sufficiently interested in the broader subject matter to enjoy writing about it.

*Super Action* was the last Europress mag you were on before they were bought by IDG Publishing. You worked on that for nearly the full run. How did you find your time on the mag? With so many SNES mags out there it must have been difficult at times to stand out?

*Super Action* was already a few issues old by the time I arrived, but they were struggling to hit deadlines and have a great deal of cohesion. I enjoyed it as much as *GB Action*, if not more, especially once I'd become editor. The first thing I did when I was appointed editor was to demand better quality paper stock as the existing paper wasn't doing the screenshots and the page designs justice. We also moved back to perfect bound (with a spine) as opposed to saddle stitched (stapled) as I just felt it gave off more of a quality vibe.

Can you remember how the mag ended? Issue 26 seems very vague on the Next Month page.

I can't remember, I'd already moved off it to prepare to launch *Sony Pro* (later named *PSX-Pro*, then *PlayStation Pro*), but it'll just have been because the Super Nintendo console and game sales were on the wane and as a direct result of that, magazine sales would have been down, and therefore profit margins would have contracted. If a mag isn't making enough money, it gets pulled. It's the same in any sector.

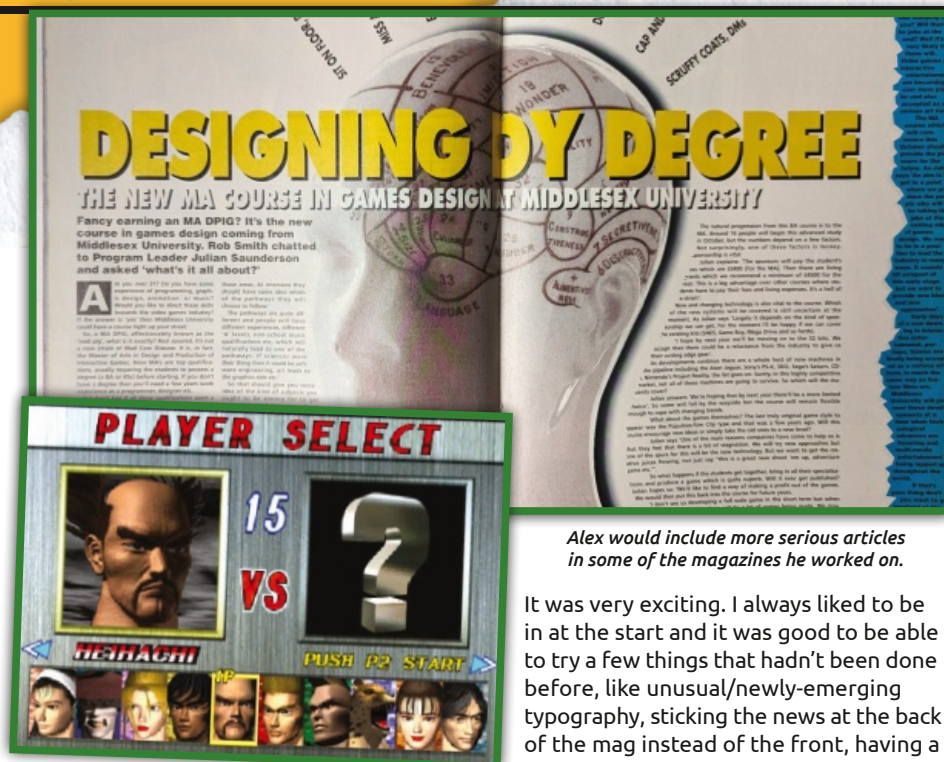


The final issue of *Super Action* gave little away that it was the end for the magazine.

IDG had taken over Europress and launched *GamePro* UK in the summer of 1995. How did you find working on the mag at this time while you were listed as a contributor.

I don't think I contributed much to it. Maybe I'd done some freelance to help out to start with, but I never had any interest in it. *Games-X* hadn't really worked in the UK, so there was no way *GamePro* would as it was essentially a monthly *Games-X*. Plus, *GamesMaster* was already established as a monthly multi-format mag, with the kudos and backing of a TV show. The business model of *GamePro* in the US was different – it relied heavily on cheap subscriptions. Essentially, a big proportion of its sales over there was accounted for by readers who lived miles from the nearest newsagent and couldn't browse everything before making a choice. It gave an overview of the sector for cheap and kept people in touch. Most of IDG's ►





Games had really progressed since Alex started on mags.

UK sales were on the newsstand which was already full of various specialist titles for each and every format. I remember thinking 'This'll never work over here' when IDG decided to launch it in the UK and I deliberately distanced myself from it. The decision smacked of 'It does well in the US, so it's bound to do well in the UK' rather than any great deal of creative thought going into its content. Plus obviously all the page skeletons had already been done so it could be launched quickly and cheaply.

Late 1995 you were launch Editor on *Sony Pro*. This must have been an exciting time with PlayStation being the "must have" machine and the industry changing?



The UK version of the magazine failed to become as popular as the US original.



An exciting time for magazines, everyone wanted to cover Sony and their impact on the games industry.



Not a game I've played but Alex won a television at a PR event for it.

money at everything. They'd drive you in a limo, take you to a show or a club, then wine and dine you all night. We met the Sex Pistols in our hotel bar on one trip to Los Angeles. There was one time I got invited to the launch of a strategy game called *Defcon 5* at Alton Towers and won a state of the art Sony TV, which one of my colleagues helped me lug onto the disabled access carriage of the monorail because it was too wide to fit through the regular monorail doors. I saw Oasis at Maine Road courtesy of Ocean/Infogrames in the comfort and safety of an exec box with the inevitable free food and booze. Likewise, Arsenal v Spurs at Highbury. I can't remember who put that one on, but it was just another example of software houses wining and dining magazine editors in the hope they'd squeeze more favourable coverage out of us. One of the most memorable parties was held on the backlot of Universal Studios in Los Angeles. All the waiters, waitresses and bar staff were dressed as Star Trek characters and the drinks had blue smoke billowing up from them. I met *Tetris* inventor Alexei Pajitnov at that one.

Very quick one - what led to the move



Sony Pro would go on to change its name twice through the years.





One may not be into golf, but who can say no when Mario's involved?

### on N64 Pro? How did you find the console/ games scene?

Again, we knew we had to launch a mag for the N64 to coincide with its arrival in the UK and I was asked to be the editor. I'd probably got a bit tired of *Sony Pro/PSX-Pro/PlayStation Pro* by then and as usual I was keen to start up a new publication from a clean slate. If I could only ever play one console, I'd choose the N64. It was the perfect platform to show off Nintendo's madness, creativity and love of quirky in-game crafting that I always felt the likes of Sony and Sega lacked.

### After roughly a decade working on magazines, what have been some of the most memorable games?

Other than *Tetris*, which I spent many hours on, I was mainly into competitive two (or more) player games. I was never one to sit on my own and try to complete a game from start to finish, although I have to say one of the most beautifully-crafted single player games I ever tried was *Pilotwings 64* for N64. The control system was so sensitive and clever and the peaceful soundtrack complemented it perfectly.

*Tiger Woods' PGA Tour Golf* on the PS2, *ISS 98* (N64), *Worms* (PlayStation), *Street Fighter II* (SNES), *Super Mario Kart*



One of the final magazines Alex worked on.



*Pilotwings 64* was one of the standout titles on the N64.

(SNES), the first few editions of *Pro Evo* on PlayStation 2 before *FIFA* eventually caught up and *Mario Golf* on the N64 all spring to mind as games that kept going back to.

I thought the multiplayer option of *Mario Kart* on the Wii was a work of genius. Playing people from all over the world simultaneously on a pretty sophisticated racing game without any fuss, glitching or hassle was a joy. I loved *Super Mario Kart* and felt that the N64 version had taken away a lot of the skill element as it was too focussed on bonuses and bashing each other off the track. The Wii version brought the emphasis on driving skill back and got the balance right again.

### What did you do after games mags and what are you up to nowadays?

I'll try and keep it as brief as possible as I left the video games sector in 1999! I got offered a job at Paragon when they took over the UK branch of IDG, but I hadn't long bought a house, got married and had a kid (my son who is now in his mid-20s!) and felt it wasn't the right time to uproot and move to Bournemouth. I took redundancy instead and immediately got a job with Zoo Media, a newly-formed company in Sheffield, to launch a new football website, *zoofootball*.

Once again I was at the start of something new. We launched the website at an England/Argentina friendly at Wembley. We smuggled so many branded balloons into the stadium that the kick-off got delayed. There were huge billboards advertising the site all around the Wembley area, and all the nearby chip shop staff were dressed in *zoofootball.com* hats and t-shirts. Even the urinals at Wembley had green ping pong balls in and little stick-on *zoofootball*-branded goals! It felt like being part of something



With online racing, hours would be lost playing against friends around the country.

really big and exciting. After a few years at Zoo I left to go freelance, during which time I had a book published *So, What Are You Calling It?* – a comedy guide to naming your children. I soon got another permanent writing job at a company called Intergame, which published business to business mags for the coin-op, casino and theme park sectors. In similar fashion to years earlier, I was then poached by a rival company, Gaming Business Media, and ultimately became editor of their weekly coin-op trade mag *Coinslot*. While I was on *Coinslot*, just for a laugh I entered a Dragons' Den-style competition in Manchester, designed to help local entrepreneurs occupy empty shop units. I'd run a small record shop in my spare time prior to that, so my idea was to do something similar on a larger scale, but with a dedicated creative space for local bands and artists to rehearse, jam or perform, and to give up-and-coming DJs a platform. After presenting my proposal to a panel of local councillors and experts in business and retail, I won a large shop unit on a short-term rent-free deal in a mall not far from where I lived, so I downed my laptop and got to work fitting the shop out and flogging records. I relocated the business twice, ending up in Affleck's Palace in Manchester city centre. Since then I've put bands on, curated bring your own vinyl nights and been in a band myself, as well as doing sports betting freelance. I'm now living on the Isle of Wight with my wife and I've got a record shop on the island which I run with a mate. I also put record fairs on in pubs and arts venues.



# THE HANDSPRING VISOR

- The visor for your hands not head



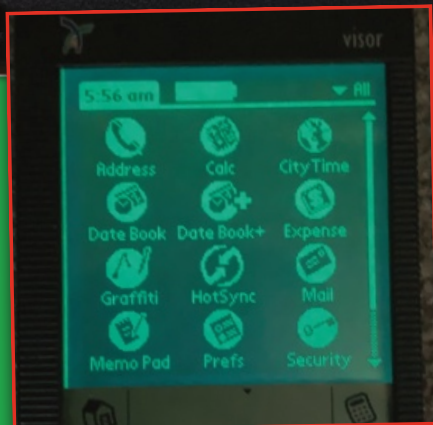
It's no surprise that the Handspring Visor mimicked the Palm Pilot. It was designed by the same three people (Jeff Hawkins, Donna Dubinsky and Ed Colligan), who led Palm Computing Inc (then a subsidiary of U.S. Robotics) as it launched its first personal digital assistant (PDA) in 1997. They left the company in 1998 to form Handspring after becoming unhappy with the direction of Palm Inc under its new ownership following the merger between USR and 3Com which was also in 1997 – what a soap opera! But what did the Visor bring to an increasingly crowded PDA market?

The 1999 Visor and Visor Deluxe use Palm OS (v3.1 to be precise), and it is your lowly scribe's humble opinion that it was, and remains, the best pen-based operating system ever to grace a mobile device. They retain the Palm's form factor too, differing only in millimetres from the original handheld. At 121x76x18mm and weighing in at just 159g including two AAA batteries that last about two months with typical use, it won't make that much of a dent in your pocket.

The CPU is a Freescale Dragonball processor running at either 16MHz (Visor) or 20MHz (Visor Deluxe), backed up by 2MB or 8MB of RAM respectively. It's as fast and responsive as it needs to be. The usual organiser applications are installed too, with some slight improvements to one or two apps over the Palm original.

The screen is 57mm square, with a resolution of 160x160 pixels. It's greyscale, handling 16 shades, and has a touch panel that can be used with the included stylus or finger tips. There is a reverse backlight that, whilst easy on the eyes, is only useful in absolute darkness.

Below the screen is the touchpad area, split into several sections. The largest is the one in the centre, used for text input via the very



*I had to take this picture under the desk to catch the backlight!*



*Not sure the boxes lend themselves to road trips.*



*Much easier to carry about this way.*





Still looking good despite being 25 years old.



It's tiny compared to the Psion Organiser II and Series 3.

easy to learn *Graffiti* handwriting system, as well as hosting shortcuts for home, menu and contrast adjustment. To the right is the section for numbers and shortcuts for *Calculator* and *Search*. At the bottom of the device are the physical buttons – from left to right: *Calendar*, *Contacts*, scroll up and down, *To-Do List* and *Memo*. There is a tiny power button on the far left, which doubles as the backlight switch, and below that a microphone. More on that in a bit.

Around the edge of the device are the stylus storage slot to the right, the IrDA port to the left and a proprietary connector on the base, allowing connection to a USB enabled docking station. The real magic of the Visor is at the top – the Springboard expansion slot. The Visor's reason for existing, it was this PDA's greatest feature and its greatest weakness. But before we get to that, a note on build quality. Made of high quality plastic, this particular example is as sturdy as the day it was bought. There's no flex in the chassis and although the screen is not scratch resistant, the clip on cover will help you out there. It detaches completely when not in use but it's easy to apply and remove, and the whole bundle fits neatly into the included slipcase. All in all, it's very well made. Unlike the straight forward Visor, the Deluxe was also available in a variety of colours: translucent orange, green, blue and an ice (basically clear) plastic, as well as the more sombre black.

The Springboard module connector offers a 68-pin slot that can accommodate a variety of add-ons. From wireless modems to Ethernet adaptors, MP3 players to GPS modules, these gave buyers additional reasons to pick a Visor over the more familiar Palm models. There was a camera module, another that allowed you to run *Powerpoint* presentations (how 90s!), and the most far reaching of all, the phone module. This allowed you to set up your

Visor as a GSM handset and make and receive calls, hence the microphone. Needless to say, those cost money, and in some cases (looking at you, GSM module), more than the PDA itself.

It wasn't all great though, as some of this funky hardware could hammer the batteries – and two AAAs are only capable of so much. In addition, if you had several of these Springboard modules, you ended up needing a bag just for the accessories, moving away from the pocket-friendly nature of the concept. The reliability of the slot was also questioned – it seems that the pins could be easily damaged if you frequently swapped modules.

Handspring would also refine the mobile communication device concept with the Treo, combining cellular and PDA into one handheld. This range, which removed the Springboard slot entirely, launched in 2002, just before Handspring and Palm merged in 2003 to form palmOne.

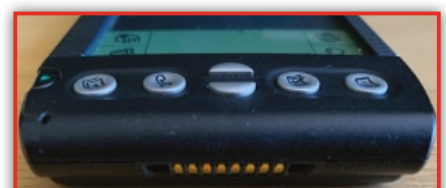
As you can see, I have three such add-ons for my Visor. MemPlug is an adaptor for Compact Flash memory cards from Portable Innovation Technology Ltd. Pretty boring but very handy. The five language translator pack for English, French, German, Italian and Spanish from Franklin could come in handy, even if it is a bit slow in actual use, and recreation is catered for with the ever-so-fitting businessman stereotype, *Tiger Woods PGA Tour Golf* from EA Sports. It's not much of a looker but hey, needs must and it's far too soon for anyone to carry an N-Gage so this is your gaming lot! It's still a bit of fun if golf is your thing, but the screen makes it a blurry mess when anything moves and the best sound effect you'll get is a beep.

When they launched, the Visors were the cheaper option compared to most Palm products. At one point, Handspring were putting real pressure on Palm with

regards to sales, but in a familiar tale, once Microsoft figured out what was going on, they decided they wanted in on what they called the Pocket PC market and times changed. By 2001, the Visor was down to £120, the Deluxe £150 and an accessory-deprived basic model could be had for under £90. It didn't matter though. The market was moving to a more feature-rich future, with the aforementioned Treo devices as well as Sony's premier range of Clie Palm OS devices. Packing in cellular comms bumped up prices and lowered battery life, and in general the handheld PDA market stuttered as mobile phones improved with greater functionality.

palmOne had moved to smartphones completely by 2009 with the Palm Pre and Pixi handsets, the former of which I thought at the time was a rather decent little phone. However, this was the dawn of the iOS/Android era, and even though Hewlett Packard bought the company in 2010, it canned the phone range the following year.

The Handspring Visor was, for a brief time, a worthy and interesting approach to the PDA conundrum – a device that did the job it needed to very well and to this day, has sufficient functionality within that it's still usable. The Springboard slot was a good idea and a solution for its time, but the advance of technology and the over-bearing might of better funded competitors meant that the concept soon outlived its usefulness. For a while, however, during those few short years, this was *the* handheld to beat, and it's still a funky piece of kit now.



The base connector.



# ENLIGHTENMENT!

## - The story of a childhood Sinclair owner

The year was 1982, I was seven years old; I had my favourite toys to play with, Lego and many Corgi and Matchbox cars, and apart from having to go to school, life was good. Dad had a fruit stall on Northampton market and in those days you could make a good living from that sort of thing.

Mum dropped us off to get the coach to school each day, and picked us up when finished. School days were so long!

Coming up to the summer holidays, Mum was there as usual with the other parents to pick me up in the car, except this time she had locked the car keys inside it (easily done in the 80s). Thanks to Ford's legendary security back then, one of the other mums tried her Fiesta key and it opened our Granada!

Why is this important? The Fiesta owner - Mrs Watts, invited us to her house around the corner so they could chat, and her daughter Jasmine and I would go swimming in their pool. I had agreed that I didn't mind swimming in my white standard issue Y fronts! In the UK, no matter how much you try and heat an outdoor pool, and no matter how warm the weather, you get cold quickly! I left the pool shivering, got dry and put on my school uniform minus pants.

We weren't rich; and my friend's dad had polio as a child so they used their savings to have a pool for him to exercise in which filled their garden.

Jasmine's older sister Hannah asked me



*The strange character of Horace started Anthony's Speccy love.*

if I'd played *Hungry Horace*, and I had no idea what she was asking about. There before me sat this little contraption with some rubber buttons. She put a cassette into the tape recorder and typed *J''''*.

This was the most amazing thing I had ever seen. I was in control of something on a TV screen, which beforehand had only ever been used to watch whatever was being shown on one of the three stations available at the time. I was then introduced to *Space Raiders*, *Penetrator* and many more games over the coming weeks.

Nothing was ever handed to me on a plate, and Mum was very frugal. I got 50p a week pocket money, and was told that if I wanted a computer I would have to save up for one. Whilst I was saving, Mum did buy me a second-hand ZX81.

Jasmine's dad, Mr Watts, came round a few times to help me understand how to use it. He was the first techie I met, he loved gadgets, and his house was filled with them. He taught me the first bit of code and helped me write a program to display the times tables on screen.

I had a Saturday job with my dad and when I had enough money saved would buy a game from Boots. I remember having *Asteroids* first, then a version of *Donkey Kong*, *Space Invaders* and so on.



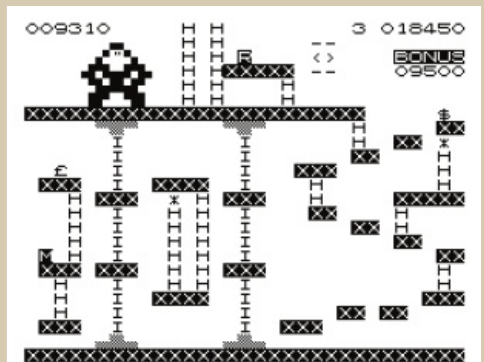
*Well, luckily this all seems straightforward enough.*



*Decent graphics and all the dash readouts needed.*

Talented coders managed to get this humble machine to run some very enjoyable games; after all, there was no sound, only a limited number of predefined square blocks to use as graphics, and other than that they used actual letters; I remember jumping over zeros (barrels) in *Donkey Kong*.

Mum would read out listings in magazines for me to type in (very slowly); and I had entered *Piranha Attack* (no graphics); *Russian Roulette* (no graphics); and my



*There were plenty of "tributes" to popular arcade games.*



*Two of the most important machines in UK computing history.*



*Many started their computer education using the ZX81.*





favourite which was I think a skiing game where you went through a vertically scrolling track (to me it was a racing game).

Often, the experience was a frustrating one. The Memotech 16KB wobble pack (Memopak 16KB Memory Extension) would get knocked and the little machine would reset, or it would overheat and turn off, or often whilst playing a game on this slow cooker my little sweaty fingers would slip on the membrane keyboard and you'd lose the game!

Mrs Watts would often look after us during the school holidays whilst Mum went to work so I got to play on the Speccy!

I yearned for a Spectrum, and in 1985 after selling my ZX81 for £25, I'd finally saved enough to buy a Spectrum+ (and if you believed the advert: a professional keyboard!) Mum took the money I'd

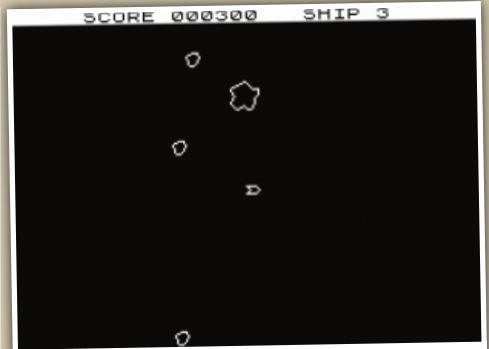


There's a generous choice of tracks in Chequered Flag.

saved in the jar with her to work (all still in coins and pound notes) and promised that she'd buy the computer from Boots when she finished work. I may have worn out a section of Mrs Watts' carpet that day as I was pacing up and down, I was so excited!

I loaded the first game on my beautiful new machine: *Chequered Flag*. Colour, sound and amazing graphics. I was in love.

Two years ago a friend had a boxed



Home versions of early arcade games were in demand.

Spectrum+ and asked me if I would like it. That was the most amazing present I could be offered. I've also since bought a boxed ZX81 with the official Sinclair 16KB RAM pack.

Now both sit on my desk on display which keeps so many good childhood memories alive, not only of the games, but also the friendships they spawned; and of course now a whole community of like-minded people reading this magazine and on Facebook.



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# SHOOTING STARS

- The Celebrities Who Embraced Computers and Consoles

Also platforming stars, adventuring stars, sports sim stars and more. We dug up early 1990s video games journalist Adam Peters and asked him to unearth those few celebrities cool enough to admit to gaming back when it was (let's be honest) anything but cool.

Last month I read a book. Not a shocking revelation. Unless you know me, in which case you're dialling 111 (*Ed. - "That's the NHS hotline"*) to report a possible concussion. *A Hero For High Times* by Ian Marchant (Vintage, 2019) is the biography of one Bob Rowberry.

Since this is *Pixel Addict*, you're now racking your brains to recall Bob's role in our world. Was he the rotund fellow they modelled (Poundland Dizzy) Seymour on? That WHSmith head office employee who hand-censored every copy of the bosomy *Vixen*-covered *Your Sinclair*? The poor chap in the back half of the costume during Llamasoft's misjudged Windsor Safari Park PR launch?

No to all of those. Some of which never happened, no matter what GaMeStRuTh101 on Reddit tells you. Mr Rowberry is an 83-year-old hippy living in a van in deepest Wales with zero links to retro gaming, but the book is less his biography than a history of youth counter culture. Since Elvis Presley invented teenagers in 1956, we've had teds, beatniks, mods, rockers, hippies, punks, goths, grebos, new age ravers and more, several of whom Bob had a passing involvement with.

The book's most contentious claim is



A book about meeting Saddam Hussein and Helena Bonham-Carter, but sadly not Sonic the Hedgehog.

that youth counter culture (in Britain at least) ended for good in the mid-1990s. Everything suddenly became mainstream and accepted. If that's true of music-based tribes, it's truer still of computer and video gamers. We even know the exact time and place it happened. How you feel about it depends upon which side of 'the great divide' your sympathies lie.

## Releasing The Goods

On the 29th of September 1995, the original Sony PlayStation launches in Europe and everything changes. Movie tie-ins, celebrity branding and labels like LucasArts have exhaled brief whiffs of cool previously, but hardware remains the domain of lab-coated tech-heads at companies in Germany, Japan, USA or (to a diminishing extent) bearded British



The machine which helped computing enter more homes.

bedroom boffins.

Sony is the exact opposite of that. Michael Jackson was at the US PlayStation launch three weeks earlier. He and Mariah Carey place two and four respectively in the UK singles chart on European launch day. Sony owns CBS and Epic Records, including that pair and hundreds of other big name artists. Sony is Walkman, Minidisc, the co-inventor of CDs. Sony is mainstream and cool at the exact point when (with the death of counter culture) those two things mean the same.

They lean into this extra heavily for the European launch, boxing the system with racer *Wipeout* and its soundtrack of Britain's leading EDM groups. Ian Marchant's book blames the Criminal Justice Act, which evicts rave culture from open air free festivals into monetised urban superclubs, for the death of counter culture. Those same clubs will now take gaming mainstream.

Official flyers promoting Sony's new machine (cheekily pre-perforated to use as roaches in recreational cigarettes) are distributed outside venues like London's Ministry of Sound, the first of 50+ UK nightclubs to boast a ten console



The Sony PlayStation's arrival in nightclubs helped push gaming into the mainstream.



Both sides of Sony's roachable PlayStation flyer, complete with giant (made up) Edge quote.





PlayStation Room. Gaming emerges from the dark of adolescent boys' bedrooms into, er, the dark of nightclubs. A world of beer and pills, music and girls. Clubbing is cool. Sony is cool. So video games are suddenly cool too.

Today's millionaire footballers (if their social media accounts are to be believed) spend more time playing EA Sports than training. Huge Hollywood stars populate generally awful movies based on games. Practically everyone's a gamer today and nobody's ashamed to admit it. Before the PlayStation's arrival, gaming was still a geeky subculture. Only a few famous folk poke their heads above the parapet. Those celebs are 'our' celebs and need to be celebrated. Right here, right now.

### Contemplating The BBC

If it ended in 1995, when did gaming as a counter culture begin? On 23 of April 1982 of course, in a spectrum of horribly clashing colours. Before annoyed owners of earlier systems burn this magazine in protest (*Ed. - "That's why it's worth buying an extra physical copy"*), let's admit monochrome systems were niche and fleeting, whilst other colour options were super spendy. Home video gaming as we know it only really begins (here in the UK) when the ZX Spectrum launches at London's Earls Court.

Just ask the celebrity gamers of 1982. With no social media you'll need to look for (and not find) them on TV. That is to say, on the BBC. Sky One launches three days after the Speccy and Channel 4 a few months later, but shows like *Games World* and *GamesMaster* are still a decade away. ITV in 1982 is a bunch of regional fiefdoms. Many of these refuse

to screen *Tiswas* as it's 'too frivolous', so what hope does gaming have?

Shortly before the Spectrum launches, the BBC promotes a machine bearing their own name (*Ed. - "as part of the computer literacy project 1979-1983"*). *The Computer Programme* follows Chris Serle learning how to use a BBC Model B. As the genial and laidback host of TV standbys *Windmill* and *Points Of View*, he's one of the UK's most recognisable stars and our first celebrity gamer, although largely just for the cameras. The first thing he does on the computer in episode one is play a *Breakout* clone, albeit not very well.

Chris chooses a giant bat, hits two blocks, loses two lives and gives up. Worse follows immediately from mentor and co-host Ian McNaught-Davis's mouth: "I hate seeing computers being used just for games. To my mind it's degrading." The inference is bleak. Home computing in general is becoming accepted in this pre-Spectrum age, but video games are on a par with pornography. Things are about to change though.

### Embracing The Spectrum

In 1982 the *NME* newspaper was a music weekly that epitomised indie cool. Today it's a website (largely consisting of celebrity fluff) that last year ran a lovely lengthy piece celebrating the Speccy's 40th anniversary. Its sole celebrity input came from Tory-baiting radio host James O'Brien. Whilst his retrospective banner-waving is welcome ("communicating with machines, taking part in stories - it was next level") O'Brien wasn't a celebrity in the 1980s; he was a child.

Plenty of big names adorn 1980s gaming

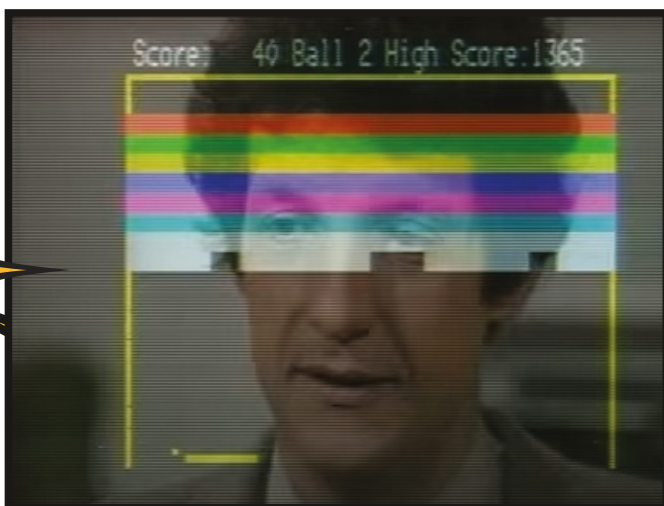


This 10 episode series ran on the BBC in 1982.

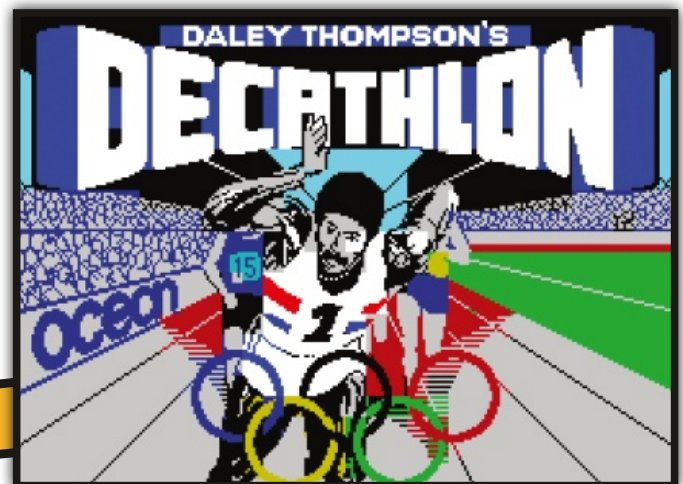
shelves, but their genuine interest in the hobby seems slim to none. "The day I was asked to participate," says the star of 1984's bestselling title *Daley Thompson's Decathlon*, "I had no idea what they were talking about." Other mid 1980s games (often sharing a cassette with some of the artists' songs) feature the likes of Frankie Goes To Hollywood, Shakin' Stevens, Samantha Fox and the Thompson Twins. We suspect the gaming pedigree of most (if not all) of these performers is similar to Daley's.

The same can't be said of Chris Sievey. Brilliant but frustrating 1984 music industry sim *The Biz* features six of the ex-Freshies singer's tracks and an interview with his alter ego Frank Sidebottom. Sievey hasn't just played the game; he programmed the whole thing. *Paul Daniels Magic Adventure* also has (more limited) input from its cover star. The bewigged magician shows off his Atari 800 man cave and homemade joystick ("you can play for four hours without getting uncomfortable") to *Personal Computer Games*.

Things have started shifting at the BBC too. The first two series (1980-81) of ▶



The exact moment Chris Serle loses at Wall on *The Computer Programme*.



Even in the 8-bit era, well-known celebrities would attach their names to games (with mixed results).





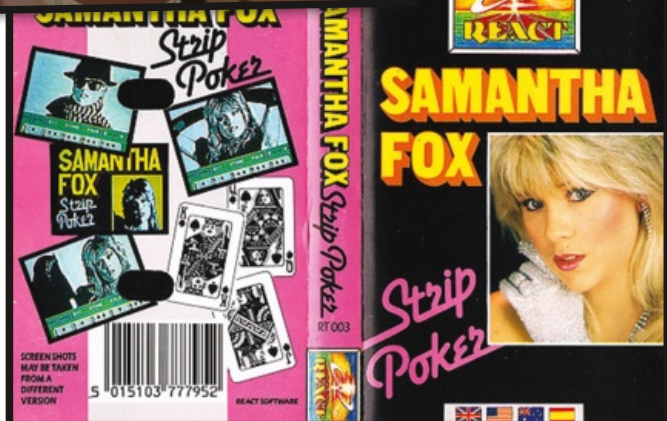
Paul Daniels was pure magic when it came to games involvement.

Crystal Maze forerunner *The Adventure Game* use computers for some challenges, but generally just fake AI password puzzles. Its third run in 1984 (post-Spectrum) comes with arcade game idents and the likes of Richard Stilgoe and Sarah Greene furiously waggling hefty joysticks. And who is that delightfully playing through an isometric 3D maze game in the opening episode of 1986's final series? Why, it's Ian McNaught-Davis of "it's degrading" fame. Stars are finally playing games on camera, but what about at home?

#### Saluting The Commodore

Despite being vastly superior in every

Ian McNaught-Davis (centre) finally embraces gaming on *The Adventure Game*.



One of the most well-known names in the 1980s was sure to lead to sales.



Keen gamer Jonathan Ross hosted the 1990 Golden Joysticks alongside Jaz Rignall and others.

way (Ed. - "Adam is a bit biased"), the Amstrad CPC offers up even fewer celebrity users than the filthy Spectrum. In their defence, both systems have a market reach expanding not far beyond the British Isles, Portugal, Spain, France and Benelux. Their bolshie 8-bit rival the Commodore 64 not only dominates gaming in its native Germany, but also has a major foothold in the home of celebrity, America.

One mid-1980s Stateside C64 user is Mick Mars, the guitarist from Mötley Crüe, one of the biggest metal bands of the era. Meanwhile, Commodore's shirt sponsorship of Bayern Munich and Chelsea prompts many PR photos of footballers gaming. Are any true gamers? Midfielder Pierre Littbarski from FC Köln and West Germany certainly is. He leaves with either a winners or runners-up medal from three consecutive World Cup finals (1982-1990) so we likely now have our first 'globally famous' music and sports star gamers.

Soon a new breed of consoles from Japan attracts even starrier stars.



Is Chris Serle (right) pleading with McNaught-Davis to let him have another go on Wall?

Jonathan Ross (a huge fan of anime, manga and other Japanese pop culture) is the leading UK celeb of the era to flaunt their Sega/Nintendo fixation. Over in the States, comic turned movie star Robin Williams names his 1989-born daughter Zelda after his favourite console series. She goes on to appear in Nintendo ads and now regularly voices video game characters.

Back in the computer arena, do 16-bit machines (with their musician-friendly MIDI capabilities) expand our roster of star gamers? That's a question *Amiga Power* asks in September 1992. After getting just a few naff radio DJs and Jonathan Ross back from Commodore's press department (every gaming system's PR is claiming Ross by this stage), my *AP* colleague Ronnie Randall sets out to find his own. These solely come from the indie rock and rave sectors, but that likely reflects *AP*'s own proclivities; I doubt many boy bands or gardening show presenters were asked.

#### Expanding The Bits

Those interviewed do all come across as true gamers. Massive Attack's 3D (or Banksy as he possibly calls himself these days) "got my Amiga for the graphics about four years ago, but all I've really



Chris Sievey would see games as a great chance to include other content, such as an interview with his own creation Frank Sidebottom.



done is play games on it." He goes on to discuss those (mostly football) games in great detail. Meanwhile, Thrash from The Orb bemoans the Amiga's lack of an inbuilt MIDI interface, unlike the Atari ST rival now appearing in studios. Thrash outlines his gaming history from the Dragon 32 onwards, but isn't entirely sure whether his favourite game *Crystal Quest* is on the Amiga or Mac. Being in The Orb is probably confusing in itself.

"Anything with noise, action and blasting everything to bits," is the preferred game genre of Chris Peat from acid house maniacs Altern 8. He received an Atari system aged 13 and studied computing, an early harbinger of the post-PlayStation wave of digital musician gamers. Some of his answers are clearly PR guff ("I buy games 8 times a month, we spend 88 pounds") but others seem genuine. Text adventure *The Hitchhikers' Guide To The Galaxy* on the ZX81 is his favourite game of all time. So much for noise, action and blasting everything to bits, Chris!

On the indie front, Sean from Manic Street Preachers admits the band have only been into games for a year or so, having encountered Amigas and STs through music-making. He says he buys 75 games a year, then alienates the entire *Amiga Power* readership by naming *Sonic* (which won't make it to the Amiga until 2021) as his favourite. Miki from Lush is that even rarer entity, a female celebrity gamer. "Our producer, Robin Guthrie, has *Strip Poker*," she sighs, "which is totally tasteless and does nothing to dispel the idea of computer gamers all being frustrated, spotty, adolescent boys."

Back in Americaland, it's perhaps no surprise that many child stars play video games. *Home Alone*'s Macaulay Culkin is one of the biggest movie stars of the early 1990s. Off camera, he spends much of his time playing 1991 Mega Drive game *ToeJam & Earl*. Not just then, but (if you believe his socials) daily even now, which is why he executive produced its 2019 sequel. Teen star Wil Wheaton joins the cast of *Star Trek: TNG* in 1987. "That summer we were obsessed with *The Legend of Zelda*," he later recalls. Wheaton remains a committed retro gamer.

### Enjoying The Show

Celebrity gamers remain thin on the ground in the UK. Surely the arrival of multiple TV shows about gaming in 1992-3 will change that? Not if the hosts' own gaming heritage is anything to go by. Whilst Dominik Diamond of C4's

*GamesMaster* has some affinity with games, Bob Mills of Sky One's *Games World* totally doesn't. ITV's Andy Crane leaves the gaming to *Bad Influence* co-host Violet Berlin.

Most celebrity guests also demonstrate little in the way of gaming skill or experience. Apart from a few surprising musical inclusions such as Take That and East 17, most early *GamesMaster* guests are middle-aged sportsmen. Particularly those from TV sports such as snooker, darts and fighting, whose participants have a reputation for appearing (for a couple of hundred quid) on any TV show that will have them. Nonetheless, this weekly roster of star guests marks a turning point in public figures finally being seen playing video games.

In 1994, I find myself writing scripts for *Games World* sitcom BT. This co-stars David Walliams, then a recent graduate rather than the fully-fledged famous he soon becomes. His relative indifference to gaming is such that he ignores most of my carefully scripted gags about games, opting instead to improvise lines about Ewoks and Polly Pocket dolls houses. I only later realise he's winding up our key audience by going on about stuff their younger sisters are into. The cheeky scamp.

That's not to say celebrity gamers don't exist in this era, but they're so scarce we have created our own. *Games World* has its Videators, larger-than-life costumed gaming stars with names like Big Boy Barry and The Violet Blade, flexing their gaming skills and comedy chops for the audience at home. Meanwhile, some games journalists are on the cusp of fame themselves. *Game Zone* reviewer Jane Goldman (aka Mrs Jonathan Ross) goes on to present TV shows and script movies such as *Kick-Ass* and *Kingsman*, whilst teenage tipsy writer Daniel Pemberton releases his first album in 1994 and is now a world leader in music for movies; Film Composer of the Year 2021, no less.

Charlie Brooker of sister mag *PC Zone* will host his eponymous *Screen Wipe*, then later on create today's award-winning, largely tech/gaming-inspired *Black Mirror*. Sure, there aren't many famous gamers in the counter culture era (1982-95) but that's all the more reason to celebrate these loyal few. Hopefully this piece has gone some way towards doing that. I'm sure there are loads I've stupidly missed. Do please let *Pixel Addict* know if so. Maybe we can sing their praises in a future issue? ▶



The King and Queen of UK retro gamers? Jonathan Ross pictured with his better half Jane Goldman, who was a well-known console gaming journalist back in the 1990s.



Take That appeared on *GamesMaster*, a memory Robbie Williams still cherishes - as discussed in the *GamesMaster* book last year.



*Amiga Power* profiled some of the biggest musician gamers back in 1992. Their article's cover star Miki from Lush reminisces with *Pixel Addict* on page 35.



Welsh rockers The Manics had the anger and energy back in the 1990s but also relaxed with some gaming.









### Chris Serle

A veteran of dozens of BBC shows, Chris now focuses mostly on voiceover work. He took time out around his 80th birthday to talk to *Pixel Addict*.

#### Can you recall your first contact with computers?

I remember the sense of wonder and awe we all felt seeing an electronic device that could interact with a human. It seems obvious now. It wasn't at the time. The size of the BBC Model B was also significant. Previous business computers were the size of a large living room. Today you can get a million times the processing power on a watch or phone, but back then it was an amazing feat fitting a computer into the size of a portable typewriter.

#### You're possibly the first person to play a computer game on British TV.

It's strange to think about that and it's a real honour.

#### Your co-host on *The Computer Programme* seemed less game-friendly.

Ian was a pioneer in providing early computing services to huge multinationals, so I can see why he'd be slightly disparaging of games. None of us came close to guessing what gaming was going to turn into. The speed of progress from *Pac-Man* and *Donkey Kong* to *Minecraft* and *Roblox* is dazzling. Of



Chris was one of the earliest pioneers in bringing computing onto our television screens.

course it's in line with the way home computers and games consoles have got better and faster.

#### What's your take on the recent rise of retro gaming?

I completely get it, although I can't imagine there are many early machines still around. I really wish I'd kept my BBC Model B.

#### Have you received much feedback about introducing computing (and gaming) to a TV audience?

In the 1990s I hosted a travelling roadshow for PC manufacturer Compaq, showcasing products to IT professionals. It always gave me a buzz when an exec from somewhere like Shell Oil or NatWest told me: "I owe it all to you. If it hadn't been for the BBC's *Computer Programme* I'd never have gone into IT." That happened a lot and was very gratifying.

#### Are you a gamer?

I'll be honest, I've never caught the gaming habit. There's a huge market for character voices in video games, so it's something I really ought to get into. Come back in a couple of years and I'll tell you about my favourite games. Or you could talk to my son, who is currently into *Rocket League*. Happy gaming!



### Miki Berenyi

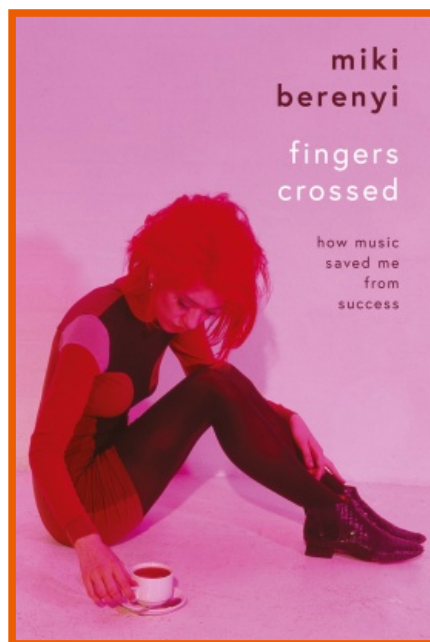
Frontwoman of 1990s band Lush whose albums have just been reissued on vinyl. Miki's memoir *Fingers Crossed: How Music Saved Me from Success* is out now in paperback from Nine Eight Books.

#### Why were there so few celebrity gamers in the early 1990s?

Gaming did have a very geeky image then. It was viewed as quite sad for adults.

#### You happily admitted to it though?

I got into gaming through visiting family in Japan a lot. There, everyone (from grandparents to small children) had a console. It was an accepted hobby for all ages/genders with no stigma at all. I found it weird that so few other Brits would admit to playing games.



Miki's book, available from the usual sellers, covering her career in music and more.

#### Admit to it?

I can tell you that from 1991 onwards, every tour bus had a video games console and people were obsessively into them. Even if you didn't play games normally, that's what everyone did on tour. Most musicians also took a Game Boy on the road as the travelling would become so boring otherwise.

#### You had an Amiga too?

I did. I was going out with John Best at the time, one half of PR firm Savage & Best who represented most major Britpop bands. He'd see me drawing maps of adventure games I was playing through, and couldn't believe I spent my time doing something so sad and geeky. I started partly seeing things from that perspective myself, wondering whether I should stop being so open about my 'uncool' gaming to the press.

#### In 1995 gaming became mainstream.

I actually stopped engaging so much with games around the same time.



Miki discussed gaming from a female perspective in magazines such as *Game Zone* (1994).



That's when they turned more overtly (classically) male. Game Boy titles were largely gender neutral and a lot of my female friends played, then the mid to late 1990s saw a shift towards more violent and blokey games. Even something with a female protagonist like *Tomb Raider* (1996) was clearly using an idealised female body shape to attract male gamers, rather than attempting to engage with women.

#### What do you think of the retro gaming revival?

People are getting older. You fall out of love with new things and harken back to when you felt things were better. I reached a point with computer games where I was seeing more sophisticated graphics and other embellishments, but little gameplay. It's good to have limitations as it makes you more creative, and older games (on more limited hardware) seemed to have more wit and inventiveness about them.

#### Are you still a gamer?

Not really, mostly due to time. When I retire, I'll find a 'best of' list and start catching up on all the great games I've missed!



#### Alex Verrey

Known to many as 1990s gaming star Big Boy Barry, Alex is now VP of PR and Comms for Embracer Freemode (running PR for multiple companies) and an expert on gaming culture.

#### Why were there so few celeb gamers pre-1995?

It was seen as a kids' pursuit. There was an embarrassment factor around it. Adults shouldn't be playing video games etc. There were a few standouts like Robin Williams who did admit it. He started out as an edgy comedian, then (post *Mork & Mindy*) became a poster



Winning a GamesMaster Golden Joystick was early exposure to Alex's gaming skills on television.

boy for family entertainment. I think he was one of the few who could get away with admitting he liked video games.

#### A handful (like Williams) came out as Nintendo gamers, but it took Sony's PlayStation to open the floodgates.

A lot of that was marketing. After the Atari crash, all consoles started being called 'Nintendos' for a while in the West. Things changed a bit with Sega going for that teen crowd by pitching as a slightly older kids' console. You still couldn't have real-time CD audio streaming on those systems, so the PlayStation hardware [with its dance music on *Wipeout* etc] changed things massively and brought in that new adult audience. Obviously Sony was always known as an adult brand, a premium brand, a cool brand. All of that helped too.

#### How was life as Big Boy Barry?

I've often joked I was born in the wrong decade. I'd love some of the coin today's pro gamers are banking, that's for sure! Competitive gaming wasn't seen as a legitimate sport in my day, which it absolutely is. It's astonishing how far we've come in such a short time. Jane Hewland was a visionary, creating *GamesMaster* and *Games World* based on her son Harry's love of video games when no one else in TV could see the appeal. Those shows exploded.

#### To what extent?

I'd have capitalised on it better than if I

knew what I know now. I was very happy to attend conventions, personal appearances, etc. Walking around my then hometown of Harrow, I could tell if someone had recognised me as I'd get those looks. People whispering to each other and pointing. For once it wasn't because I was morbidly obese but because I was that guy on TV, so what a lovely change that was for me!

#### Do you consider yourself a retro or modern gamer today?

I love that question, but I'm going to give a slightly bullsh\*t answer. I consider myself a gamer. I don't make distinctions. I love my big modern AAA blockbusters, but also have a special place in my heart for retro entertainment. As for my favourite game of all time... (Ed. - "Sorry, we've run out of space.")



As Big Boy Barry, Alex became one of the most popular characters on *Games World*.



# HOME BREW HEROES

By Marc Jowett

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@marc.jowett



## - Marc's holding out for a Homebrew Hero and finds quite a few

A surprise McDonald's tie-in, another strong month for the Game Boy and Yuzo Koshiro's new Mega Drive game finally gets a name. All this and more in Homebrew Heroes!

## GRIMACE'S BIRTHDAY

Format: GAME BOY COLOR  
Release Date: OUT NOW

For those of us who are old enough to remember the cast of McDonald's characters, Grimace (former Milkshake thief turned hero) recently got his own Game Boy game. Best of all? It's free! *Pixel Addict* caught up with Tom Lockwood (Gumpy Function) to tell us more about the surprise platform game release.

### How did the project with McDonald's come about?

The advertising agency Wieden+Kennedy came to Krool Toys in hopes of partnering on something to release in tandem with a new campaign they were launching for Grimace's Birthday. To their surprise, McDonald's welcomed the idea of a retro video game given that it fits in with the nostalgic spirit of Grimace and the McDonald's characters at large. Once the design brief was laid out by Krool Toys in significant detail and approved by McDonald's, Krool Toys hired me as the Artist, Game Designer, Level Designer and Team Manager, Bryan Taylor as Programmer and finally Blezz Beats would take on music and SFX production.

### How did you find creating a game for a company like McDonald's?

Krool Toys had weekly approval meetings with McDonald's to make sure the game would be in step with their brand. While we had relative freedom over designing mechanics and the broader game design, visuals were something that McDonald's took very seriously. Whether it was the characters themselves or the environments they found themselves in, any art asset I created would need to be approved. At one point, we had electricity running through the cables in the traditional platforming sections of the game that would zap Grimace if he touched a spark. We later changed that mechanic to a squirrel that you could bounce on because the idea of electrocuting Grimace didn't sit well with McDonald's and their kid-friendly brand. They were also very particular about the cutscenes. We needed to closely match the approved palettes of each character and make sure their likeness did not skew away from the depictions they provided to Krool Toys and the team at large.

### How long did the game take to put together?

We had seven weeks to create the game from scratch according to Krool Toys' design brief. It took some time for McDonald's to approve the brief and Krool Toys was only able to begin the project once fully signed off. The release date of *Grimace's Birthday* was already set in stone according to McDonald's marketing plan, leaving us with quite a tight deadline to complete and deliver a GB ROM ready for release.

The cutscenes themselves were a considerable amount of work. The sheer volume of screens to draw took some time and of course, there were plenty of revisions as feedback came in. Bryan also spent a long time making sure the



An early mock-up of level 2, which Gumpy Function kindly revealed to us.

skating felt the best it could be under the time constraints. That was the most important aspect of the gameplay to us.

### Could we see further collaboration between you and McDonald's, or indeed other franchises?

It was a pleasure working with Krool Toys and I think the buzz generated from *Grimace's Birthday* will hopefully translate to more opportunities. I'd be more than happy to collaborate with Krool Toys to get more GB and GBC games out into the wild! There has been a significant call from fans to get *Grimace's Birthday* out as an official physical release. If McDonald's allowed it, the whole Dev team would be thrilled to not only release the game on a cartridge but expand its scope in greater detail. I, for one, would love to explore the skating mechanics in much greater detail amongst other things. Head on over to the official game website, [www.grimacesbirthday.com](http://www.grimacesbirthday.com) to try it out. ▶



The game is a platform affair, with a lot of skateboarding involved.



# EARTHION

Format: MEGA DRIVE  
Release Date: Q3 2024

Legendary composer and sound programmer Yuzo Koshiro (*Revenge Of Shinobi*, *Streets Of Rage* etc) has been teasing us for months regarding a new Mega Drive shmup that is currently in development. That game now has an official title, *Earthion*.

The title was given three syllables as a

nod to other shmups, with *Gradius* and *Darius* cited as an inspiration.

Yuzo has shared some early video footage of the game on his Twitter page @yuzokoshiro and it could well become another classic Mega Drive shmup. We will keep you up to date with its progress right here.



We WANT MORE INFO! *Earthion* could be something special indeed!

# ISLE OF TUNE

Format: MEGA DRIVE  
Release Date: TBC

The original *Isle Of Tune* was critically acclaimed upon its release on the IOS mobile platform and it isn't difficult to see why, as the game is something very original indeed. Thanks to Space Pants Games, it is now heading to the Mega Drive.



SimCity meets music? Sounds unique to us!

The game involves you creating your own unique musical island. You do this by creating a layout on the island, roadside elements are your instruments and cars are the player. The idea is to unleash your inner composer and create an island that is populated and highly rated by others. An island version of attempting to get to the top of the musical charts if you will.

But is it merely a port of a mobile game? Of course it isn't! Julian Scott tells us that while he is going to be faithful to the original, there will be some improvements for the Mega Drive version, including multiple new instruments.

The original version works well on mobile as it allows levels to be shared between players. The team is working on including this important feature in the Mega Drive version.

*Isle Of Tune* is one of those games that has to be seen to be believed, as it's difficult to describe. You can play the original *Isle Of Tune* for yourself at [www.isleoftune.com/](http://www.isleoftune.com/)



Can you create the perfect town with your musical skills?

# TRAUMATARIUM

Format: GAME BOY  
Release Date: DECEMBER 2023



It's only a flesh wound.

A terrible famine descended upon an unsuspecting kingdom. Crops and farm animals alike are dying. Whispers talk of an ancient evil that has once again awakened in the long-forgotten dungeons. This evil power wants to extend its skeletal claws and smash the world of the living once and for all, leaving nothing but fire and brimstone.

The Queen puts out a call, the bravest of the brave step forward, and they all perish in the meat grinder that are these ancient dungeons. And with each soul

perished, the evil gains more strength, more ethereal power to continue draining the kingdom of all its resources.

That is your background story to *Traumatarium*, which is a randomly generated dungeon crawler, presented as an adventure book with static screens that enable you to make decisions on how you proceed. Do you investigate the seemingly lifeless skeleton in the doorway? Or do you leave the room, just in case it attacks you? The battles themselves involve a short sequence which gives



you a choice of fighting with the A button or using an item with the B button.

Managing your health and vitality is key to making your way to the final room. The stronger you are for each encounter, the less likely you are to be skewered. You will be able to purchase weapons and food

from the nearby town to aid your quest.

Dungeons are randomly generated, so *Traumatarium* will lend itself to multiple playthroughs and we are told that during some, hidden relics may be visible but not accessible, meaning further playthroughs

are required to acquire them. On occasion, explorers may also provide hints as to where the special rooms are located.

Developer Horatiu.nyc are hoping to have the game ready by the end of the year, published by Broke Studio.

## THE FALLEN CROWN

Format: GAME BOY COLOR  
Release Date: TBC

Atavist Game's new Metroidvania game *The Fallen Crown* was fully funded on Kickstarter in just 36 hours. With the help of Publisher Broke Studio, the game will now see a physical release on the Game Boy Color.

You play as an undead warrior, who has no memory of his past or name. The aim of the game is unsurprising, to recover your body and the memories of your past.

We are told the game can be played in a couple of different ways. Either by going gung ho and scything everything down like a maniac or by taking a stealthy approach, which conjures up images of games such as *Metal Gear Solid*. It will be interesting to see how these choices affect the gameplay.

While the game is Metroidvania at heart, it also contains many of the classic platforming elements you would expect

to see in games such as *Mario* or *Sonic*, with the ability to defeat foes by jumping on their heads, as well as wielding weapons. The game will contain both primary and secondary weapons, which can be switched on the fly. Different weapons and armour can also be acquired as you progress. Puzzle elements are also present, from pulling levers to fixing ropes.

NPCs are on hand to help throughout the game as well as providing side quests, adding an RPG element into the mix.

There are three base classes to choose from in *The Fallen Crown*, a soldier, a scout and a wizard, which will no doubt add extra replay value to the game. The most exciting part of this, however, is that Atavist Games are hoping to include an ability which will change your class based on the gear you decide to wear. While time-consuming to implement, we are hoping that this is something that

makes it to the final version.

Atavist Games tell us that defeating baddies won't simply be a case of putting a sword through them and killing them with one hit. Even on the easier enemies, the player will need to time their own attacks and watch for enemy attack patterns to successfully take them down.

A Metroidvania/Platform/RPG game on the Game Boy Color? Atavist Games certainly have plans to make *The Fallen Crown* a very ambitious game indeed, and we look forward to seeing the finished product when it releases.



Dragons are not welcome at the monthly Skull meeting.

shapes vertically. Clever stuff indeed.

There are plenty of ways to customise the experience, such as changing the level and the speed of the shapes. You can widen the field too.

*Puzzul Swap* is a game that could be expanded upon, should the developer wish to turn it into a fully-fledged paid-for Mega Drive game as it is an amazing concept. To have a game like this given away free of charge is marvellous!

Point your browser towards [www.twitter.com/\\_gf64/status/1667971724078620674](https://www.twitter.com/_gf64/status/1667971724078620674) to download the game and show the developer some love. 🐉

## PUZZUL SWAP

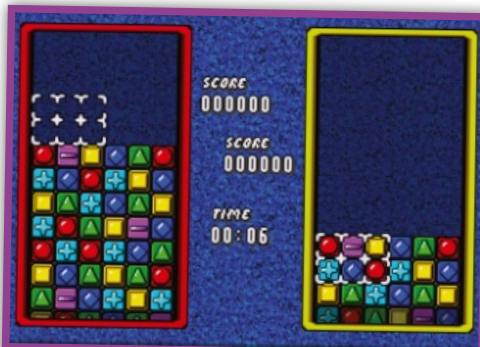
Format: MEGA DRIVE  
Release Date: OUT NOW

We love free games here at *Pixel Addict*, especially when they are as good as *Puzzul Swap*, a clever little puzzle game that has just hit the Mega Drive, courtesy of developer GF64.

Playing alone or against a friend, your mission is to clear the field of shapes by moving them alongside identical shapes, either horizontally or vertically. As you do this, the board fills up with new shapes from the bottom.

The clever bit with *Puzzul Swap* revolves around the three and six-button controllers. Using the three-button pad, moves are limited to horizontal swaps. Plug in a six-button pad, and *Puzzul Swap* allows you to use the extra

buttons, giving you an advantage with a greater field in which to swap shapes, and also giving you the option to move



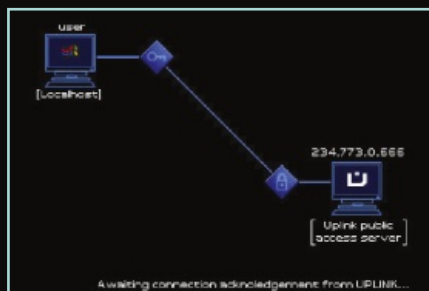
The game can be played with a mate, or an enemy if you wish.

# UPLINK: HACKER ELITE

- The world of hacking is no game....or is it?

Every system, by virtue of its rules and regulations, inevitably creates a subset of individuals who refuse to play by those rules. These individuals, often operating in the moral and ethical grey areas, cherish freedom and the free flow of information, bending or breaking rules for personal satisfaction or profit. Known as hackers, they exist on the fringe of the digital landscape. Have you ever wondered what it's like to be one? The game *Uplink* lets you step into their world.

In *Uplink*, you begin your journey as a novice agent, offering your skills via the Uplink Corporation. With a basic gateway computer at your disposal, you



The graphics may be quite limited but you can see what's happening.

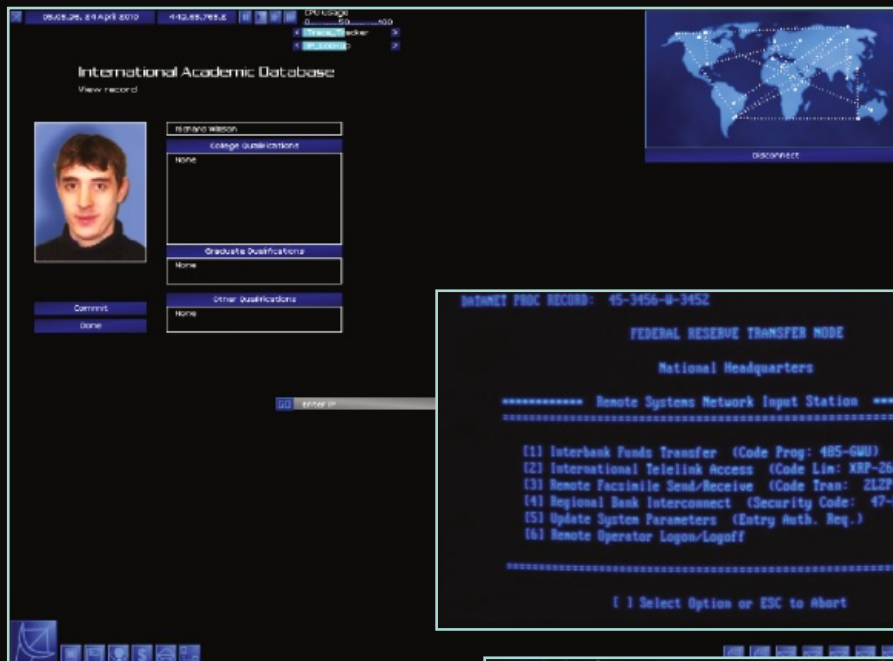
## Books

*The Cuckoo's Egg: Tracking a Spy Through the Maze of Computer Espionage* by Clifford Stoll.

How did tracking an error of 75 cents in the computer usage accounts become a hunt for a hacker who penetrated the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory system? And how come the whole thing was uncovered by an astronomer? This far-fetched sounding story is true which makes the read even more engaging. You thought astronomers were boring? Think again!

## Notable mentions:

*Snow Crash* by Neil Stephenson  
*Cryptonomicon* by Neil Stephenson  
*Neuromancer* by William Gibson



Changing people's college qualifications. I wonder what Richard is doing nowadays?

connect to a network offering internal services, letting you purchase additional software and hardware upgrades. Most importantly though, this network connects you with potential clients who post assignments on the internal feed. Initially, due to your low rank, most tasks will remain unavailable to you, leaving you with jobs akin to a small-time file thief. These initial tasks don't require much expertise - a simple password cracker usually suffices. However, the pay reflects the simplicity of these early jobs. As you ascend the ranks, more complex and rewarding assignments become available. From forging educational and social security records to erasing (or creating!) criminal records, investigating bank transactions, or even tracking other hackers - the range of tasks expands as your expertise and experience grow.

As the complexity of assignments increases, so do the stakes. Our targets become more secure and significant effort is put into tracking and hunting us down, making it increasingly important to cover our tracks. This introduces the element of logs. Every connection we make, every action we take, leaves a trace in the form of a log - even if we merely route our connection through a system, the source and target IPs are recorded. These logs can be used to trace us, so it's crucial to manage them



Sneakers would show the world of computer hacking on the big screen back in 1992.

promptly after an assignment's completion. While simple deletion might seem like an easy solution, if done incorrectly, it can backfire, not only failing to cover our tracks but even aiding in our pursuit.

Upon first encounter, *Uplink* may seem like a straightforward hacking sandbox, taking on assignments, earning money, investing in better tools, tackling more rewarding tasks. Yet, the thrill of these activities would fade over time if not for an engaging storyline that gradually unravels within this virtual world.

## Audio

### Hacked Podcast

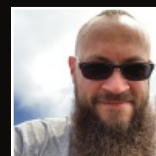
A technology podcast that features a story about people using tech in unintended ways. Ever wondered what could possibly go wrong when using open Wi-Fi? Well... more than you think. [www.hackedpodcast.com](http://www.hackedpodcast.com)





By Mateusz Nowaczewski

@40MHzGaming



## Video

When it comes to movies that depict hacking it is much easier to make a list of bad ones than to find something that is worth watching, here are a couple.

### Sneakers (1992)

When the past comes back to haunt a specialist experienced in penetration testing, all sorts of hell breaks loose. The movie, while being a suspenseful thriller, remains true to the essence of speedy hacking, whilst avoiding traps and cliches that ridiculed so many other movies covering this theme.

### Mr. Robot (2015-2019)

Cyber Security engineer by day and vigilante hacker by night... haven't we seen that sort of thing before? Well yes, but this take is worth watching. Plus, a good role for Rami Malek.

File: None attached

Close Clear Send

Utilising the game's minimalistic text interface, the narrative is delivered well and gives the journey within the game world a potential purpose. There are choices to be made that affect in-game reality, but contrary to the binary nature of the devices you manipulate, these choices aren't as simple as 1 or 0, right or wrong. What's more, if neither option appeals to you, the game allows you the freedom not to choose at all.

In the digital age, hacking is often romanticised as an act of technological rebellion. An opportunity to challenge systems, uncover hidden truths, and reclaim power from authority figures.



Time to choose your next target on the World map.

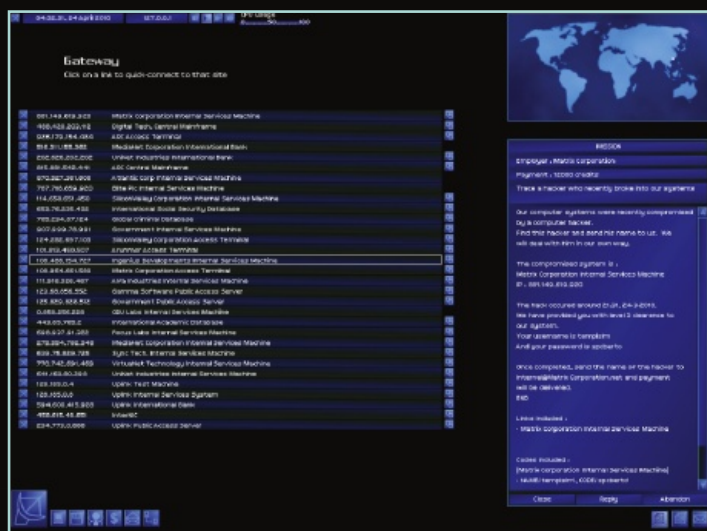
This culture is characterised by a demonstrable skill set that operates behind the screen, and with such power and abilities come considerable risks. Thankfully, games like *Uplink* provide those without the requisite skill, or the desire to face these risks, a glimpse into this world. While this glance might not perfectly mirror reality, it certainly offers a thrill simulating a sense of virtual power. Best of all, there's no real-world danger involved in playing. *Uplink* won't see you behind bars for your digital endeavours. *Uplink* won't land you in jail for your cyber exploits. However, beware of the real-life risk of oversleeping after an engaging night session!

## Creators

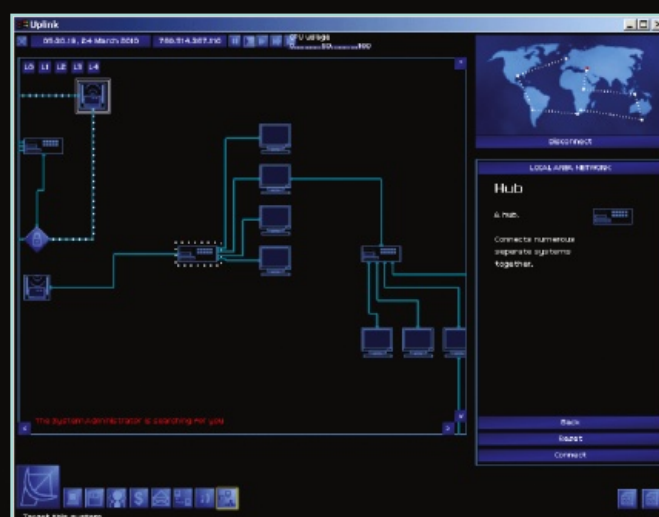
Founded in 2001 by three friends - Chris Delay, Mark Morris and Thomas Arundel, Introversion Software claimed to be "the last of the bedroom programmers". While I'm not sure about the "last" thing, the bedroom part is accurate as the company moved to an office only after the release of their third game. The company is probably best known for *Prison Architect* - a private prison construction and management simulation.

File: None attached

Close Clear Send



Plenty of information on the screen to keep you busy.



These hacking jobs seem to be getting more indepth.

# WHAT WAS ONCE OLD, IS NEW AGAIN

## - Arcade gaming in the home

Welcome back my fellow pixel addicts, to another article about the revival of classic gaming. This time we are discussing arcade cabinets in the home, courtesy of Arcade1up. A pioneering company in video game preservation, Arcade1up brings classic arcade gaming home with full-size cabinets and 1/3 scale Countercade machines, but with the same level of quality.

### Ready, Fight!

For starters, Arcade1up's later cabinet - The Yoga Flame Edition - is a replacement of sorts to its *Street Fighter II: Champion Edition* Big Blue cabinet, which includes the better *Street Fighter II: Champion Edition*, *Hyper Fighting* and *Turbo*, among other Capcom arcade titles. The Yoga Flame Edition contains the same *Street Fighter II* games, along with *Final Fight*, *Strider*, *Saturday Night Slam Masters* and many others. The Yoga Flame cabinet was the first to introduce Arcade1up's WIFI LIVE feature, which allows people with the same cabinet to compete together online.

During its initial launch, the LIVE feature was riddled with poor connection ping, control latency and match drop issues, but I am happy to report that Arcade1up has addressed the issues and online matches are now stable with no control latency or slow ping. When playing a game, you can select between local and online play. Based on the Fightcade software (which originated on PC to play classic arcade fighting games online), the online feature includes an actual online lobby, where you can challenge other cabinet owners, or play against the CPU until a human competitor logs in to fight.

### Step Back In Time

As a cabinet, the arcade emulation that pulls everything together is very stable. There isn't a single game that has any notable problems or gameplay issues. Playing *Final Fight*, for example, is a dream come true for my younger, teenage self. Back in those days, you either went to the arcades or hoped the game you liked would eventually get a home console port. In fact *Final Fight* and *Street Fighter II* were the main reasons I wanted a Super Nintendo / Super Famicom. In retrospect these ports were incredible for their time (sans *Final Fight* missing my favourite character, Guy) but nothing beats owning the real thing. Sitting in front of an arcade cabinet in your home - and playing the games that essentially consumed your youth - is a surreal experience.

### If You Build It They Will Come...

But before you can play you have to build the cabinet (you thought these behemoths came prebuilt? Oh no, not even close!). These cabinets require basic assembly skills. I'm no carpenter, but managed with my wife obligingly assisting. Assembling the cabinet took roughly three to four hours. Most of the supplied instructions were easy to follow, until we reached the internal support bars for the back of the cabinet. Those instructions were unclear, but luckily we found a build video on YouTube that explained the process easily and simply. The remaining part to assemble was the LCD monitor with the game PCB attached to the back of it.



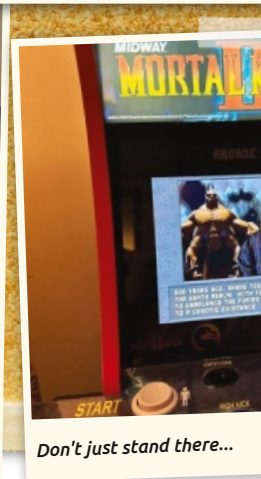
Any cabinet featuring *Street Fighter 2* is always going to be popular.

The only major issue encountered when attaching the LCD to the cabinet was how wobbly the screen felt while screwing it in. It really is a two-person job; one holds the monitor while the other screws it into place. But once it is finished, the monitor is sturdy and it never needs to be touched again, unless you need to clean the screen for fingerprints and the like.

The Countercade units are similar beasts in how they function, but unlike the large-scale cabinets, they arrive in their retail boxes fully assembled. The only assembly required is to attach the supplied power brick (located in the back of the machine) and plug it into an outlet somewhere in your game room. Due to the price reduction of the Countercades, the online LIVE feature found in cabinets like the Yoga Flame Edition is not available in these smaller arcade units. With that said, Arcade1up's Countercade units are perfectly suited for an ever-growing arcade collection



*Mortal Kombat 2 is a big improvement*



*Don't just stand there...*

that either has 1) limited internet access/ Wifi connections or 2) no internet at all.

### Variety Makes The World Go Round

The Marvel Super Heroes 2 Countercade includes three Marvel-based Capcom fighting games (*Marvel Super Heroes*, *X-Men vs Street Fighter* and *Marvel vs Capcom 1*) and a single, 2D side-scrolling beat 'em up (*The Punisher*). Like the Yoga Flame cabinet, the Marvel Super Heroes 2 Countercade functions identically. It includes the same high quality arcade joysticks and a much smaller 8" LCD monitor. Like every Arcade1up unit, the marquee has vibrant colours that look great when lit up by the machine.

### Playtesting...

The games themselves play flawlessly, even during local, two-player match-ups. The provided arcade joysticks and buttons feel like the real thing, as they make the familiar clicking sounds that were commonplace in the original cabinets of





the day. The 2D fighting games are very easy to control, even when executing the more elaborate movesets, including Ryo/Ken's Dragon Punch or Hurricane kick. Switching between teammates is as simple as pressing **High Punch** and **High Kick** together, if you have your controls configured in this fashion.

The second Arcade1up Countercade - which is fully licensed from Midway (in fact, every Arcade1up unit is licensed from their respective publishers/developers) - includes the first four *Mortal Kombat* games, but not *Mortal Kombat 4* itself. Confused yet? Well, the cabinet includes the original *Mortal Kombat*, *Mortal Kombat II*, *Mortal Kombat 3* and its update, *Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3*, which includes the fighters missing from the original *Mortal Kombat 3* arcade game.

#### Issues...

Why Arcade1up ignored the seminal

*Mortal Kombat 4* - along with its (then) edgy 3D polygon graphics and weapon-based gameplay - remains a mystery to this gamer/journalist. But then again, the guys behind Arcade1up are always mixing and matching content and releasing new cabinets with previously ignored titles. There is a chance that a future Countercade will include *Mortal Kombat 4*, along with the previously mentioned MK games.

The exclusion of *MK4* - while a bit disappointing - doesn't ruin the fun this Countercade offers. The emulation of all four arcade *Mortal Kombat* games is almost flawless, apart from the occasional (and very rare) performance hiccup. These ultra rare glitches cause the game (basically any of the provided *Mortal Kombat* games) to stutter mid-combat, but the issue disappears rather quickly and it doesn't affect the game's overall performance. It's just a quick annoyance that should

Loser makes tea AND washes up afterwards!

Well she sure looks grumpy!

be really addressed by Arcade1up's tech team with a downloadable patch. Maybe the good people over at Arcade1up will read my rant and begin work on a fix? Fingers crossed!

#### Summary

Every Arcade1up cabinet or Countercade - no matter what it is - includes a menu system to adjust game difficulty, enable/disable CRT scan line emulation and adjust the sound, along with a host of other useful features. The lack of online Live functionality in the Countercades is a bit disappointing, but it's not a deal breaker (especially if you're looking to spend half the money).

The full-size cabinets are the stars of the show, however. The overall build quality - from the cabinets to the software itself - makes them worth every penny, especially if you're looking to have arcade-like online multiplayer action in the privacy of your own home.

Thanks to Arcade1up, our childhood dreams of owning our favourite coin-op(s) is now a reality. Are you game? I know I certainly am!

Until the next issue, my pixel addict friends. Game on and game hard.





# RELEASE THE RANDOMISERS

## - Breathe new life into old games

No matter how many times you start up an old video game, it's always the same game. But what if you could take the elements of that game and shuffle them around to create a new experience? If that sounds like fun, maybe a randomiser is right for you.

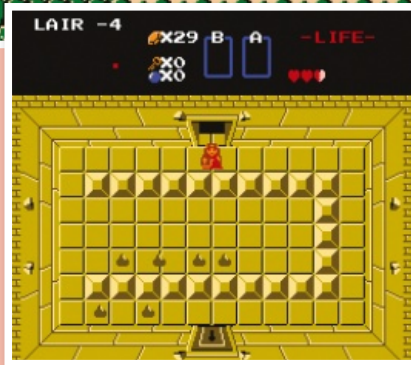
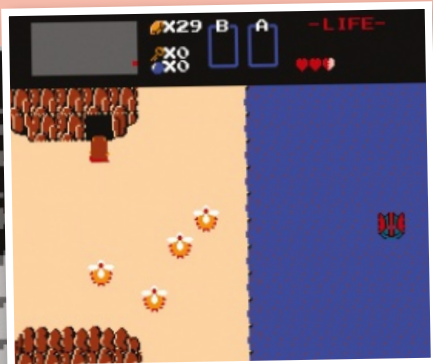
### You Know What You Know

What are the games you reach for when settling in for an afternoon of nostalgia-fuelled retro fun? When it comes to old favourites, you might have a list three miles long. Names like *Doom*, *Mario*, *Castlevania* - you know them front to back. Years of experience have taught you just what to expect, and you take comfort in the finger skills you've built up by playing the same game over and over again.

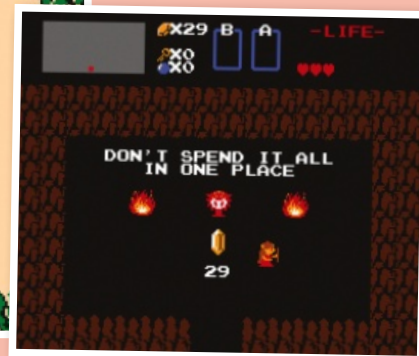
But the problem with nostalgia is the pain you experience when remembering the past. You can bring back the memories of those days gone by, but that's all they will be. As many times as you play that game, it's still the same game. All the treasures are in the same spots, and all the upgrades come at the same time. Once you've found all the secrets in *The Legend of Zelda*, you'll never again experience the joy of burning random bushes in Hyrule to find a secret. Or can you?

### Reinventing The Wheel

Yes my friend, you can get a brand new experience out of the same old game, and randomisers are the way to do it. You might be familiar with ROM hacks, where programmers modify games to add new levels or features. A randomiser is a genre of ROM hack that takes the basic framework of a game and shuffles things around to make it feel brand new. With most randomisers including quality-of-life improvements, fun graphical options, and bug fixes, you might find that you prefer the rando over the original! There might even be multiple randomisers



Enemies can be shuffled across the game. Goriyas and Lynels on the same screen? Oh my!



Add a little bit of luck by shuffling rupee secrets.

all their options and presets to get you started. Popular randomisers have vibrant communities full of developers, play testers, racers, and streamers who can help a newbie feel right at home. So let's check out two of my favourites to see why they're great examples of the art form and why you might want to check them out.

### Zelda Randomizer

One of the oldest and most popular randomisers is for the first *Legend of Zelda* on the NES. *Zelda* is a game about exploration and discovery, and its gameplay cycle of battling enemies while scouring dungeons for items and Triforce pieces is ripe for randomising. There's more than one randomiser for *Zelda*, but my preference is Fred Coughlin's *Zelda 1 Randomizer*. He's written several others,



To really add some challenge, turn on entrance shuffle.

available for the same game, each with a different philosophy on how to remix the game.

Think of it like bringing the randomisation features of games like *Rogue* or *Elite* into your other favourite games. They create a new game out of an old one via two fundamental inputs: a flag set and a seed. The randomiser program will present you with a list of options you'd like to randomise, such as enemy placement, level order, available items, and so on. Once you've ticked all your boxes, the program collects your choices into a summary called a flag set. Next, a random number called the seed value is generated. Reusing a seed value will give the exact same results each time, allowing you to share a level with others. Once you've added these ingredients, the randomiser swizzles them all together with a user-supplied game ROM or executable. The end result is a new version of your favourite game with fresh challenges.

The great thing is that it's not hard to do. Most have graphical interfaces that explain



By Dan Vincent

@kefkafloyd

www.userlandia.com



NPCs give helpful gameplay tips that even experts might find useful.

but Z1R is probably his most famous.

Z1R's longevity is thanks to its breadth and depth of options. You can craft an infinite number of Hyrules and its dungeons to explore. If you want to turn the challenge up to eleven you can randomise the world map, add invisible walls, and even restrict the number of hearts. If you thought that the wand casting fire spells was less than helpful, you can change it to throw explosive bombs instead. Cosmetic options are also plentiful. Want to play as Zelda, a Moblin, or even Trogdor the Burninator? Z1R has you covered.

I tend to go for basics like shuffling enemy, item, and dungeon locations. Throw some new dungeon maps on top and that guarantees me a new experience without getting too crazy. Every Z1R seed gives me a new appreciation for the strength of the original *Zelda*'s design. No matter what you randomise or how much challenge you add, the soul of *Zelda* is still there. *Zelda Randomizer* gives you a chance to explore the realm of Hyrule and experience its wonders with fresh eyes once again.

You can download Z1R at <https://sites.google.com/site/zeldarandomizer/>

### Final Fantasy IV Free Enterprise

Some randomisers can feel overwhelming at times with their litany of features and options. But there are some that focus on a limited set of options and build the randomiser around a core gameplay mechanic. The developers behind *Final Fantasy IV Free Enterprise* asked the question: "What would *Final Fantasy IV*



Zeromus' final form gets new randomised artwork.

be like if you got the airship at the beginning of the game?" After a few hours of game time most *Final Fantasy* games give you an airship to speed up exploration of their vast worlds. *Final Fantasy IV* is no exception; Cecil and company acquire their airship, the Enterprise, about a quarter of the way through the game. The game is completely linear until that point.

By giving you an airship at the start of the game, FE transforms *Final Fantasy IV* into a very non-linear experience. Cutscenes and dialogue are also stripped away to refocus the game towards hunting and exploration. With the Enterprise at your command you're free to search the world for key items, bosses, and characters. After finding the Crystal, you can defeat the final boss, Zeromus, in the Lunar Core to complete the game. FE tries to keep its mechanics in the spirit of the original game by not radically changing the skills and abilities of characters or bosses. Experience points and enemy power are adjusted depending on their new locations to account for FE's non-linear nature.

The dev team's restraint is the randomiser's hidden strength. New features aren't added willy-nilly, and those that are added endured a lot of scrutiny to make the cut. This randomiser has an identity which shines through regardless of your randomisation choices. Custom character

palettes by SchalaKitty add a fun surprise when a new member joins your party. NPCs give clever clues for game mechanics you might not have heard before. And when you do finally make it to Zeromus, his sprite is replaced with artwork plucked from other games, pop culture, and memes. If beating Zeromus isn't your idea of a challenge, there's other ways to complete the game, like item quests and hunting the Four Fiends of the Elements. If you want less of the roleplaying and more of the game in your RPG, give *Free Enterprise* a try.

FF4:FE is available at [www.ff4fe.com](http://www.ff4fe.com).

### The Choice Is Yours...

These are only two of the many randomisers available. They're not just for console games either—randomisers for *Fallout 4*, *Skyrim*, and of course *Doom* are available. They can't give you back that experience of playing a game for the first time, but they can make an old friend feel fresh again. So give one a try and see if you're up to the challenge. 🎮

Three on two... we like those odds.





# CLASSIC GAMES REVISITED: RESIDENT EVIL

- Alan remembers the time when evil was very good...

Welcome back to a new recurring feature that sees me revisiting a series of classic games and considering just how well they have stood the test of time. This month I fire up *Resident Evil*, released by Capcom in 1996, originally for the Sony PlayStation and later on for many systems. It was lauded as a ground breaking game at the time, but is it really as good as we remember?

Our perception of *good* and *bad* is fairly binary. Normally we have a set of arbitrarily

defined tick-boxes. Cross enough off and something is good. If you have lots of gaps then it is bad. But now and again you encounter flawed genius. Something that apparently has too much wrong to be good but despite many faults, greatness still shines through like a beacon. Some might argue that *Resident Evil* is flawed genius. Despite a number of significant gameplay issues the game went on to become Capcom's biggest selling debut title. But how has it aged? Are those issues any more of a problem when replayed today? Let's consider the evidence...

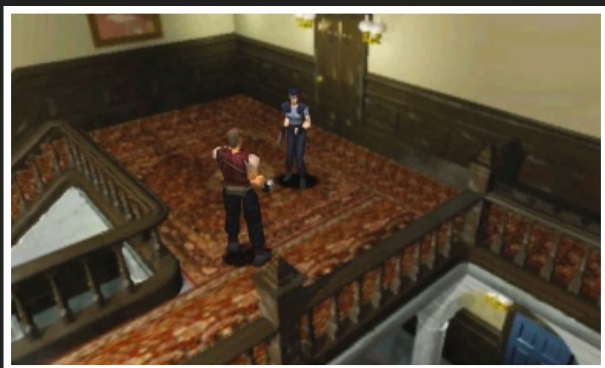
creatures. Your mission is to discover the fate of your team, survive and escape.

What unfolds is a three dimensional action-adventure game all wrapped up in a brilliant and foreboding atmosphere. The release was so pioneering it actually defined a new genre in video gaming; that of *survival horror*. There is a selectable difficulty, depending on which of the two playable characters you choose - Jill is armed with a pistol, can pick locks and, crucially, can carry two more items than Chris (this doesn't sound much but it makes a big difference), while Chris starts armed only with a knife.

## Keys Are, Um... Key

Your mission is to explore the mansion, collect items, solve puzzles and obtain keys to open up further areas. You can save your game at any time, provided you can access a typewriter and you have a typewriter ribbon - there are plenty lying about to be collected.

As you progress you find diaries and journals that shed light on the events that unfolded before your arrival. However,



You start in the hall and this becomes your go-to safe space.

## What Are We Doing Here?

You start with a brilliant full motion video that provides the back story. Set on the outskirts of Raccoon Forest you play as either Jill Valentine or Chris Redfield, part of the S.T.A.R.S. elite task force sent to locate their colleagues, who have disappeared. You find yourself trapped in a mansion, overrun by zombies and other disturbing





*You get to venture into the mansion's grounds later in the game.*

as you investigate this increasingly disturbing story, you do so under the threat that at any moment you might turn a corner and find yourself face-to-face with a zombie, a giant spider or snake, a rabid dog or any number of other creatures.

You can dispatch them with either your starting weapon, or others that you find during your exploration. Your potential arsenal includes a shotgun, a Colt Python, a bazooka (that fires both explosive and acid rounds), a flamethrower and a rocket launcher. You can also obtain bonus weapons to be used in another playthrough if you finish the game in less than three hours. Ammunition can also be found as you explore and it is always worth moving the furniture about as there are often some extra bullets or shells hiding behind!

#### **Don't Waste Your Ammo**

Alternatively, rather than shooting all the bad guys, it can be easier to simply avoid them. Many move fairly sluggishly and *avoiding* rather than *killing* is often the more effective strategy. Indeed, if you try and shoot everything it is possible to run out of ammunition, which can make life particularly tricky later in the game when you really need it. Periodically you will encounter a boss monster; it is best to save the ammunition for your more powerful weapons for these battles.

You can also collect other objects, including maps, puzzle solving items, and different types of herbs which can be combined to provide health boosts or a remedy against poison.

You can only carry a limited number of things at a time (six or eight depending on whether you are playing as Chris or

Jill) but the remainder can be stored in trunks which can be found in the typewriter rooms. To retrieve an item, conveniently you don't have to return to the same trunk that it was left in; for reasons that are never quite explained, the trunks are apparently linked by some kind of magical portal, meaning that anything previously stored in one can be retrieved from any of them.

#### **Think Smart**

The puzzles are clever and varied, ranging from the traditional *find an item and move it to another location* type to those that employ more inventive ways to tax the old grey-matter. A few may be a little left-field but most are logical and provide that necessary hit of self-satisfaction when you work them out. And of course - tricky puzzles are perhaps less of an issue today; there is little chance of hitting a wall as there is a huge



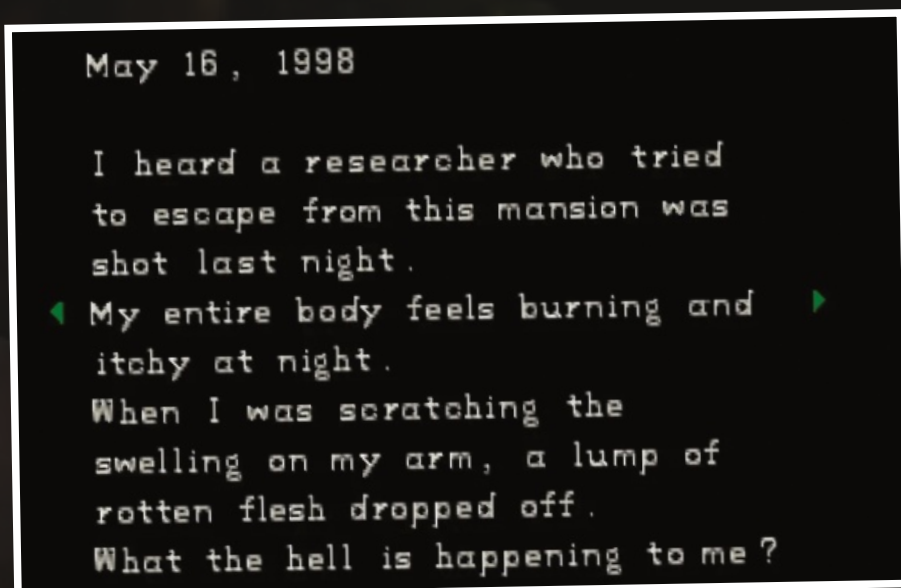
*Move furniture about to solve puzzles - in this case to block poisonous gas.*

resource of information available on the internet. Back in 1996, with YouTube in its fledgling infancy, there were no long-play walkthroughs to be found and you were very much on your own!

#### **So Much Wrong**

So far so good then, but this wouldn't be a fair review if I don't revisit some of the game's (really quite major) faults...

- A standard programming cheat is used (common in early adventure games to make them appear bigger than they really are) by placing puzzle items a long way from where they are needed, so a significant amount of tedious walking back and forth across the play area is required.
- The typewriter / ribbon save system is clever, but at the same time can feel a bit cumbersome, when you reach a tricky section you will find yourself having to replay parts of the game repeatedly or alternatively retrace your steps frequently to return to a typewriter room to save. ►



*Journals and diaries provide an increasingly macabre background to the story.*

**Resident Evil timeline (not including Revelations or other spin-offs):**

*Resident Evil* – 1996  
*Resident Evil (Director's Cut)* – 1998  
*Resident Evil 2* – 1998  
*Resident Evil 3* – 1999  
*Resident Evil Code Veronica* – 2000  
*Resident Evil Zero* – 2002  
*Resident Evil (Remake)* – 2002  
*Resident Evil 4* – 2005  
*Resident Evil 5* – 2009  
*Resident Evil 6* – 2012  
*Resident Evil 7: Biohazard* – 2017  
*Resident Evil 2 (Remake)* – 2019  
*Resident Evil 3 (Remake)* – 2020  
*Resident Evil Village* – 2021  
*Resident Evil 4 (Remake)* – 2023

- If you run out of ammunition, progress past a certain point can become very difficult.
- Each time you move room-to-room there are animations showing doors opening or the ascent / descent of the stairs, to mask the loading times. Perhaps better than a "loading please wait" message but it still becomes annoying.
- While you do get used to the control system, initially it can feel quite unintuitive; pushing left and right to turn your character and up and down to make them walk forwards or backwards, so there are times when you are pressing up to walk down the screen, which just feels wrong.
- Your viewpoint is fixed (imagine watching the action unfold on footage from a series of static CCTV cameras) and sometimes the view can unexpectedly change at an inconvenient moment, which can make you pause or turn the wrong way. This is particularly infuriating if it happens while you are being attacked and you inadvertently walk towards the danger and die.
- The script and voice acting is shockingly poor; so bad as to be really quite amusing. It isn't helped by some slow loading times meaning that conversations are very staccato

affairs, punctuated by some long and unnatural sounding pauses.

So, having read that list you may have very good reason to conclude that the game would be nigh on unplayable. But, you couldn't be more wrong.

**Flawed Genius**

Despite the many problems, *Resident Evil* was...and still is...fantastic! While the game gave rise to countless (and some arguably better) sequels and remakes the original still holds its own and is still a very playable game indeed. The mansion feels real, the story is fantastic, and while this is without doubt a tough game, progression is predominantly fair and rewarding.

**Don't Play If You Have A Heart Condition...**

But the jewel in its crown is the fact that it is scary. Properly scary. It is hugely atmospheric and looks great, with the solid-looking graphics often accompanied by chilling sound effects. Samples like a ticking clock, rustling leaves, echoing footsteps or even just the doors opening and closing combined with a fabulous soundtrack of eerie music creates a fabulous spine-chilling ambiance that could have been lifted straight from a classic horror movie.

Before I played *Resident Evil* I had never been unsettled by a video game before. But there are moments in this game that provide as big a fright as any scary film I have seen. The first time you encounter the dogs is a genuine landmark moment in video game history (if you know, you know!), and even replaying now, nearly 30 years later and knowing exactly what is coming, it still makes you jump out of your skin! (Ed. - "Oh my goodness yes!")

There is one point in the game where you have just completed a long walk back over previously explored ground and suddenly you find yourself watching a cut-scene of a *Lurker* (a giant, frog-like monster) pursuing you over the same route, right



A cut scene before a titanic boss battle.

up to the door that you *absolutely* know that you are standing right behind, with control being returned to your character just as that door is opening. It is beautifully executed and the effect is petrifying. I challenge anyone to navigate that section without incurring a significantly raised pulse!

**Good To Be Bad**

So, despite the woeful script and wooden voice acting, the awkward controls, the slow loading screens, the irritating save system and the many other substantial flaws that blight this game, *Resident Evil* is still really pretty special. Against all the odds, Capcom managed to achieve something quite remarkable. They produced a game that, despite being absolutely riddled with faults, remains completely brilliant.

I genuinely cannot think of another video game that is so bad that is just so bloody good.

**GRAPHICS 93%**

The various locations all feel solid and real and the FMV cutscenes are terrific. Nice introduction too.

**SOUND 95%**

The music and sound effects are perfect in setting the tremendously foreboding atmosphere and unsettling the player. So much so, I will completely forgive the truly awful voice acting!

**GRAB FACTOR 85%**

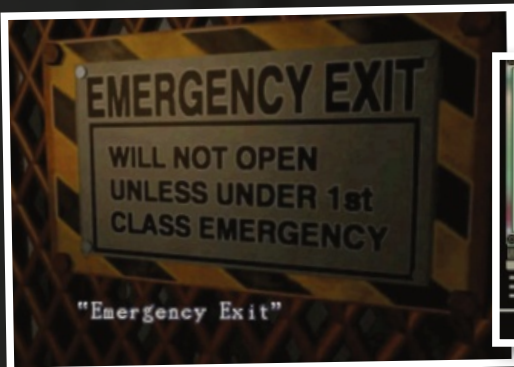
Quite a long introduction to sit through and a first time player will almost certainly die frequently early on, but the game certainly grabs you and doesn't let go.

**PLAYABILITY 93%**

This is an absolutely brilliant, landmark game which, despite its faults, is still very enjoyable to play. It is tough but thoroughly rewarding and absolutely deserves its place in history.

**PA**  
VERDICT

**92%**



I'm being eaten by a zombie, isn't that an emergency!!



A well designed and easy to navigate view of your status can be accessed at the press of a button.



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# THE C64 MINI

- Andrew has a play with the first mini from Retro Games Ltd

I didn't have a Commodore 64 as a child, I was firmly in the Spectrum 48K camp. Only one friend had a C64 that I can recall. A machine connected to a tape drive (or 'datasette' as I now know), I remember going round to play on it every so often. The only game I remember playing is *Outrun*, still one of my favourite games today. More on that later.

The Commodore 64 was the best selling 8-bit computer of all time (Guinness Book of Records). Released in 1982, it stayed in production until 1994, with sales estimates ranging from 12.5million units up to 17 million at the higher end. That's a *lot* of C64s!! Only the Sinclair Spectrum kept it off the top spot in the UK. There's a whole history which I'll cover in a future issue.

Rather than buy a C64 from the 1990s with the associated hassle and cost, I instead opted for THEC64 Mini. Partly for space reasons (the bane of many a retro collector!), and partly for a nice easy experience as this little marvel also allows loading of games from USB sticks instead of limiting purchasers to the (still impressive) built in 64 game collection.

## A Dinky Yet Quite Powerful Machine

Released by Retro Games Ltd in 2018, THEC64 Mini is a nice compact little machine measuring 20x10x3cm. For a more retro comparison, it's roughly the size of a VHS cassette tape. Powered by an ARM A20 SoC chip with a Linux OS, the C64 part is provided by the VICE emulator. The output is 4:3 format just like the original, but over HDMI at 720p. HDMI can often make the older machines look too defined and *pixelated*

but for true nostalgic immersion, there is a scanline option which emulates the picture of an old CRT. Software updates can be applied via USB stick. To power the unit, a micro USB port is provided, but you do have to provide your own charger.

There is a keyboard on the machine, but sadly it is non-functional. Naturally of course, the community was having none of that 'just for show' nonsense and has swiftly found a resolution to this with a conversion kit available at: [www.pixel.addict.media/c64minikit](http://www.pixel.addict.media/c64minikit)

It is not for the faint hearted however, requiring chopping up of the Mini's keyboard and considerable solder skills to put it all together. See the assembly video on Retro Recipes YouTube channel: [www.pixel.addict.media/RetroRecipes](http://www.pixel.addict.media/RetroRecipes)

For the less brave amongst us, you can plug a keyboard into one of the two USB ports. The Mini also provides an on-screen keyboard, accessible via a button on the provided joystick. Unless you are planning to program in C64 BASIC (also possible!) then the onscreen keyboard is all you'll realistically need.

## Plug In and Play

Setting up is easy. Dig out an old phone charger, plug in the HDMI cable. Press the button on the side to start it up. The joystick that comes with the Mini is 'adequate'. It won't win any awards, but it's a solid enough chunky affair with a nice clicky stick and lots of buttons to control games and the Mini's various

menus. It does the job.

## What Games Are In The Box?

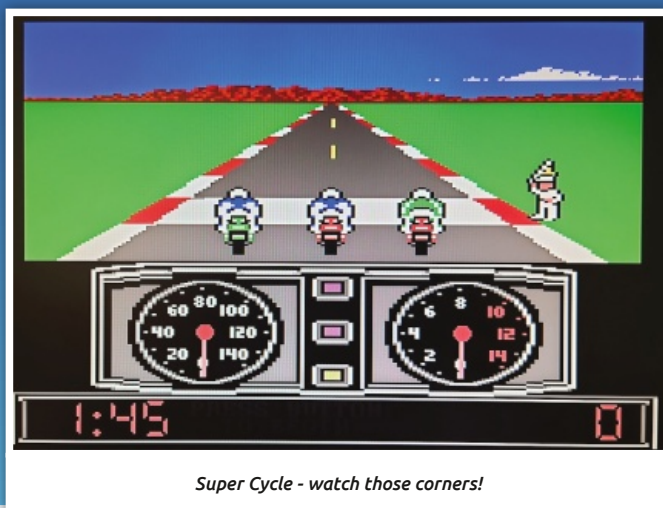
There are too many to list here, but the highlighted games on the box are: *Armalyte*, *Boulder Dash*, *California Games*, *Creatures*, *Impossible Mission II*, *Nebulus*, *Nodes of Yesod*, *Paradroid*, *Robin of the Wood*, *Speedball 2*, *Spindizzy* and *Uridium*. Full lists are available via a quick Google.



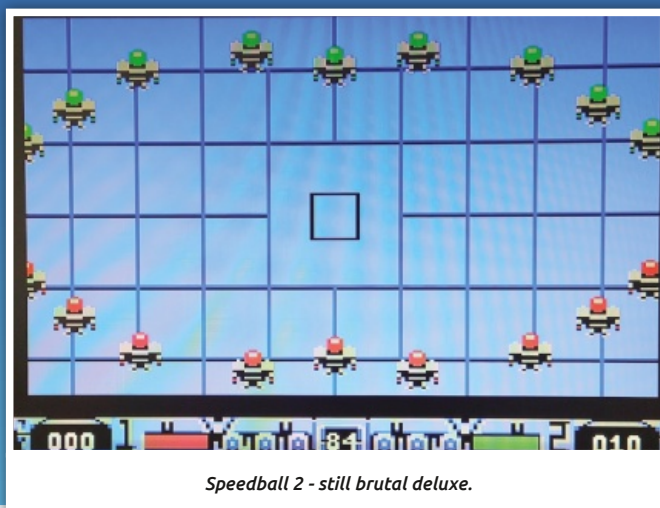
Games can be saved using game states either into THEC64's own storage or onto a USB stick. Or you can write your own using the included BASIC!

## Let's Play!

I couldn't possibly play everything for this article, I'd need the whole magazine for that! Some highlights I spotted though were *Super Cycle*, *Nebulus* and



*Super Cycle - watch those corners!*



*Speedball 2 - still brutal deluxe.*



*Speedball 2. Super Cycle* is a racing highlight on the Mini. Clever use of colour cycling gives a super smooth scrolling experience, the game is HARD! You have to have your wits about you as a corner appears more or less out of nowhere, and it's easy to skid off the track at high speed and give your rider a tumble. Fortunately he (or she!) is made of stern stuff and picks themselves up to have another go.



*Nebulus* is a game I remember from my Amiga days, so I gave it a good go. Just as hard as the Amiga version, apart from the lower colour count it's more or less indistinguishable from its 16-bit big brother. Scrolling is smooth and it's great fun to play. As with the Amiga version, it's chuffing difficult!

*Speedball 2* – Well the C64 has a good

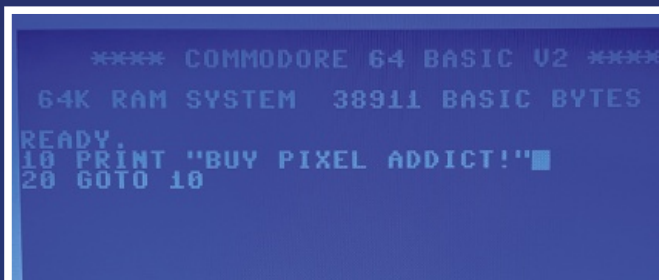
go. Again I'm amazed what this computer with only 64KB of RAM can achieve. It's just a bit blocky for me, it's not easy to see what is going on. But it's still fun and the computer gave this ageing gamer a good butt kicking!

A personal favourite of mine on my friend's C64 was *Outrun*. Not included in the game set, you need to load this from a USB stick. The C64 Mini won't work with the default disk image, but a quick trawl on the forums found an updated version. It's lots of fun. The music is excellent, the scrolling is smooth, and it's pretty easy to play. Of all the arcade conversions for the 8-bit and 16-bit micros, it's easily the best. The nostalgia was strong with this one!

#### The Big Brother

Following the success of THEC64 Mini, Retro Games followed up with a new version in December 2019. Originally marketed as THEC64 Maxi, but sold as THEC64, this version is a full-size replica of the original 'breadbin' model, complete with working keyboard. The game list was also updated. There are still 64 games, but with 11 new games replacing some of the Mini's originals.

As with the Mini, inside it is an ARM based computer running Linux OS and the VICE emulator. Ports are HDMI, USB and micro USB. Despite being full-size, THEC64 is not a replica of the original and does not include the various input/output ports of the original Commodore 64. Which is a bit of a shame. While



*Go on, you know you want to.*

including a cassette port would be pretty pointless admittedly, it would have been fun to at least include the cartridge port. Price and complexity would of course have played a part in this decision I'm sure.

#### I Want A Real Modern Commodore 64!

Neither the Mini or the Maxi models are full replicas of the original Commodore 64. However, if a proper replica is your thing, then there are projects out there providing replica boards such as the Ultimate 64 which implements the original Commodore 64 in FPGA and provides the original input/output ports alongside modern ports including HDMI, USB and Ethernet. There is quite a waiting list though. And you need your own breadbin C64 with a working keyboard to transplant the Ultimate 64 into.

#### Verdict

I like the THEC64 Mini. And I will never cease to be amazed at what was possible on a machine with just 64KB of memory. The famous SID chip pumps out some very good tunes and the graphics are very impressive. The longevity of the original Commodore 64 (it stayed in production till 1994!) is not surprising at all, and the Mini is a well made tribute to the original machine. At only £35 now on Amazon, it's an absolute bargain too.



*Outrun - the best of the home computer versions.*



*Nebulus - run little frog thing!*

# PC ZONE 30TH ANNIVERSARY - 14TH JULY 2023

## - Paul snags an invite to his dream event at The Union Bar, Regents Place

On the 4th of March 1993 Dennis Publishing released their latest gaming magazine - *PC Zone*. With the PC games market growing thanks to more powerful machines, Dennis saw the perfect chance to make a statement.

Running from 1993 to 2010, *PC Zone* featured some of the greatest (and funniest) writers of the time. You could argue that it built on what *ZERO* did before it. Writers such as Charlie Brooker and Duncan MacDonald would add humour to well written reviews and features over the years.

This year ex *Zone* Deputy Editor Richie Shoemaker (another fan of magazines) started on his plan to put together a celebration party for 30 years since *PC Zone* began. The aim was to bring together as many ex-staff and friends of the mag together for the first time in years - and thanks to my magazine obsession, I was invited along.

Richie was the first person I saw. He was a bundle of nervous energy when the doors opened at 5pm, but the venue soon filled up with the invited and Richie's fears were allayed. There were a number of guests who featured on the *Maximum Power Up* podcast, including Gary Penn of *Zzap* fame who gave me a huge hug!

A projector had been set up running a highlight reel of key *PC Zone* memories - Mr Cursor, The Lara Croft Cruelty Zoo, a vigorous joystick test, trips to E3 plus more. Most of the slides highlighted how important (and funny) games magazines used to be. Key people from *Zone*'s history were happy to talk to me about their time on the mag. Steve Hill, Will Porter, Lord Paul Lakin, covered the various successes and challenges over the years.

It was the first time I have spoken to Lord Lakin. With him being a big part of *Zero*, *Game Zone* and *PC Zone* he is high



Steve Merrett was happy to pose for a photo - even if he did have to crouch down a bit!

on my interview list so hopefully you'll see them in these pages. Several EMAP staff were also in attendance, Paul Davies, Jaime Smith and Ed Lomas were all part of a golden late 1990s era of CVG. Ed was also part of *Official Dreamcast Magazine* from Dennis so we had a lot of SEGA chat as well as the pressures of print deadlines! Steve Merrett, ex-editor of *Mean Machines SEGA*, was discussing his special guest appearance at Digitiser Live Weekend (which will have happened by now) - in the 1990s Merrett had quite a rivalry with the teletext games section.

Well known names such as Charlie Brooker of *Black Mirror* & *Screenwipe* fame, and Rhianna Pratchett who has written many game scripts for the likes of *Mirror's Edge* and *Tomb Raider 2013* also made it along. Both were busy chatting to various people and I was lucky enough to grab a few minutes with them despite my nerves kicking in big time!

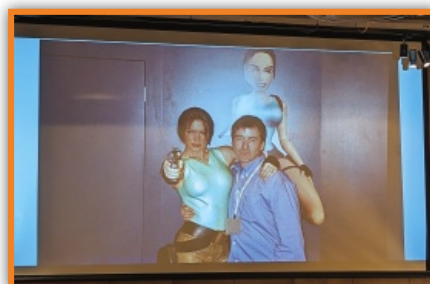
The man who made this happen took to the stage (well stood on a chair) to say a few words. Although the turnout was fantastic there were some people who



The late Duncan MacDonald was behind the excellent Mr Cursor character for several years.

were unable to make it or are sadly no longer with us. Jamie Sefton and Will Porter also received a massive thanks for helping so much. Richie raised a glass to absent friends and a thank you to everyone who helped make *Zone* the success it was and also to those who ensure it is still loved today.

Coming away from the event, I couldn't stop smiling. Part of that was hearing how impressed/excited so many magazine heroes of mine were to hear that we make a magazine and that the passion for print lives on - I wonder if we'll end up with a 30th birthday?



Even the biggest gaming stars can't resist the PC Zone team.



The final few remaining in the pub after an amazing night.



Ed Lomas shared some great stories about his time on CVG and the pressures of print deadlines.... ahem.



I was very happy to have a chance to speak to Rhianna Pratchett and Gary Penn.



# MARVEL LEGENDS ICONS

## - Soaring with the silver surfer?

By Adrian Browne

[www.pixel.addict.media/adrianbrowne](http://www.pixel.addict.media/adrianbrowne)

Wrath of Khan#7667



The Canadian/American company ToyBiz successfully merged with Marvel Entertainment Group in 1998 with ToyBiz becoming a subsidiary of the newly formed company now fittingly re-named Marvel Enterprises. Gradually the company began to move its focus away from the ToyBiz moniker with some of its products released in the mid-2000s bearing the name "Marvel Toys".

Nevertheless the first three waves of the *Marvel Legends Icons* line released in 2006 bore the ToyBiz branding whilst that same year Marvel Entertainment abruptly ended its agreement with ToyBiz Worldwide Ltd. one year before it was due to expire. In January of that year, toy giant Hasbro swooped in and eagerly signed a lucrative five year licensing agreement with Marvel Entertainment for the whopping sum of \$205 million. Hasbro had sealed the deal and now had the rights to produce toys and even games based on the illustrious Marvel Comic licenses.

### Silver By Name...

The Silver Surfer 12" Icons figure was released in 2006 by Hasbro as part of their third wave (sixth wave if you include the earlier ToyBiz waves). The figure stands at 12" tall and is painted from head to toe in a glossy, well you guessed it - silver paint. There are a few smudges and scuffs here and there but for a mass market figure it's really excellent. The sculpting is very good and it does a great job of capturing the comic book incarnation of the stern, often conflicted, yet noble Silver Surfer. The chest, arms and legs are suitably muscled as expected for a superhero. The eyes are painted a faint grey white colour and this coupled with the authentic head sculpt manages to perfectly capture the Surfer's cosmic regality and eldritch origins.

### Movement In All Directions

In total there are more than 30 points of articulation. The head rotates 360 degrees, tilts from side to side and has both upwards and downwards movements. The torso also rotates 360 degrees and has an ab-crunch allowing the Surfer to bend forward. The arms rotate and pivot outwards whilst the elbows are double-jointed and thus capable of achieving a more than 90 degree bend. The hands rotate at the wrist with additional wrist tilt. The legs can be rotated to do the full *Van Damme* and move forwards and backwards. However the legs are quite stiff and a little imprecise with a somewhat limited range of movement in some joints. The ankles



In the Marvel universe, the Surfer was an ally of the Fantastic Four, a member of the Defenders, the Annihilators, Titans Three, Secret Defenders, and the God Squad.



The Silver Surfer returned to the Marvel universe with a one shot released in 1982, written by Stan Lee, Art by John Byrne.



The Surfer triumphantly returned to comics once more for a stellar 146 issue run beginning in 1987.





The Silver Surfer first appeared in *The Fantastic Four* issue 48.



The Surfers "Power cosmic" includes, energy manipulation, matter manipulation. God-like strength, invulnerability, light-speed travel and Cosmic senses!



The 1998 Silver Surfer animated series ran for 13 episodes on the Fox Kids Network.

also rotate 360 degrees and feature forward and backwards tilt. Due to the moulding the Silver Surfer is not always that steady on his feet but with some manipulation a variety of poses can be accomplished.

#### The Only Accessory You Need

The Surfer's glorious and iconic board and the only accessory present, is comprised of two parts that must be snapped together. It's also painted entirely in silver. There are five horizontal grooves that run the length of the board, lending it some texture and breaking up what would otherwise be a simple expanse of silver.

There are holes located on the surfer's soles which can fit onto two pegs located on the board. The pegs are sufficiently distanced from each other to allow for wide leg stances and multitudinous poses.

The Marvel Legends Icons Silver Surfer is definitely best displayed atop his iconic cosmic surfboard. Originally priced at \$20.00 at retail these now command in the region of \$60 to \$80 if mint in the box. If you are a fan of the Silver Surfer then this figure comes recommended as due to its size, multiple points of

articulation, deftly sculpted physique and glossy but not overly shiny paint it makes an excellent and standout display piece.

To me my board!!!

## THE SKY-RIDER OF THE SPACEWAYS!

### Who Is The Silver Surfer?

The brainchild of seminal artist Jack "King" Kirby, the Silver Surfer ranks among one of Marvel's possibly most esoteric silver-age creations. He first appeared in 1966 in *Fantastic Four* 48 as the feared Herald of the Planet devouring, god-like being Galactus. Gaining cult status amongst University students with its trippy cosmological themes, issues 48-50 would come to be known as *The Galactus Trilogy*.

Just two years later the *Sentinel of the Space-Ways* debuted in his own pulse pounding 68 page, book length comic. Originally a native of the Utopian planet Zenn-La, Norrin Radd grew restless. The inward looking complacency that had set in amongst a society that had, through technology, eradicated war, crime and illness, rendered him bored and eager to explore what might lie beyond the meagre confines of his idyllic home world.

When Galactus the devourer of worlds cast his voracious appetite towards the Surfers home-world he saw the opportunity to save his planet from its intended fate whilst also gaining the new life he so desperately craved. Norrin Radd was reborn as the Silver Surfer but this rebirth was not the panacea he imagined. In return he had to abandon his old life and forsake his dearly beloved Shalla-Bal. Thus began the Surfer's first unknowing steps on a path paved with tragedy.

The destruction of the first planet the Surfer chose to satiate his new master's unending appetite nearly drove the Surfer to the precipice of madness. His inherent, noble, high minded nature was in opposition to his master's unassailed demands. Yet using his near omnipotent powers Galactus now altered the fabric of the Surfers mind, engulfing his emotions, suppressing his past memories, cooling his conscience.

Now converted, the Surfer evinced more willingness to lead Galactus to ever more planetary morsels; Massikron, Elynore-143, Draven-Barr, and eventually our treasured blue Earth...

The Surfer scouted ahead and called his hungering master forth by means of a cosmic signal, heralding Earth as a suitable target for his needs. With all the powers at his disposal he furiously battled against the mighty Fantastic



Four. Yet an encounter with "The Thing's" girlfriend, blind sculptress Alicia Masters, elicited a change in the Surfer - at first he proclaimed *"Earth is but a twinkling dot... a paltry pebble...in the vastness of Space"* yet she reminded him of his mortality and saw "the unimaginable

loneliness" he carried within.

Thus convinced the Silver Surfer rebelled against his master in defence of the Earth proclaiming *"For I have learned from the Humans how glorious it can be to have a cause worth dying for!"* For his impudence Galactus swore that the Surfer would perish, yet the quirky genius Reed Richards/Mr Fantastic threatened to use the "Ultimate Nullifier" a weapon from Galactus' home-world against him, which by Galactus' own admission was a weapon that had the power to *"Destroy a galaxy... To lay waste to a universe!"*

Displaying his own skewed brand of honour, Galactus the world eater, in being true to his word agrees to spare the Earth from his terrible appetite and leave, if only Mr Fantastic would return the weapon to him.

However the Surfer's betrayal was a transgression he could not allow to go unpunished. By means of an impenetrable energy barrier the Surfer was exiled to the confines of Earth, where he would no longer freely ride the mysterious space lanes of the Universe. Further bridled, his *Space Time* powers were removed but he retained his fabled cosmic powers.



The mythic *"Fallen Angel"* as Kirby himself dubbed the Silver Surfer, had redeemed himself: and would now wander amongst the peoples of the earth.

However the Surfer would find himself mistreated and cruelly misunderstood by the people of his newly adopted home-world.

In fact these events are what ended the original 18 issue run - Stan Lee felt that he had written himself into a corner by having the Surfer turn bad in the face of humanity's raw unfettered nature and ultimately due to moral concerns this was not a path he wished to continue down.

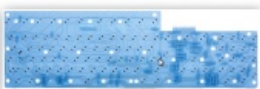
Perhaps it was this premature cancellation, the *less is more* factor, coupled with the wonderful, standout, rarefied nature of Norrin Radd's adventures that succeeded in bolstering the Surfer's popularity for so many years. 



No mere box shall hold for long the mighty Silver Surfer! Ahem!

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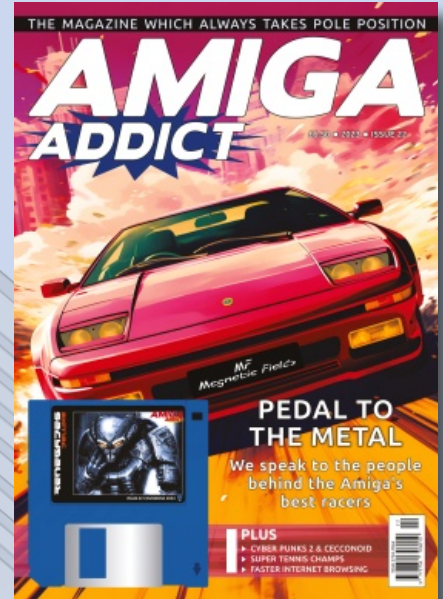
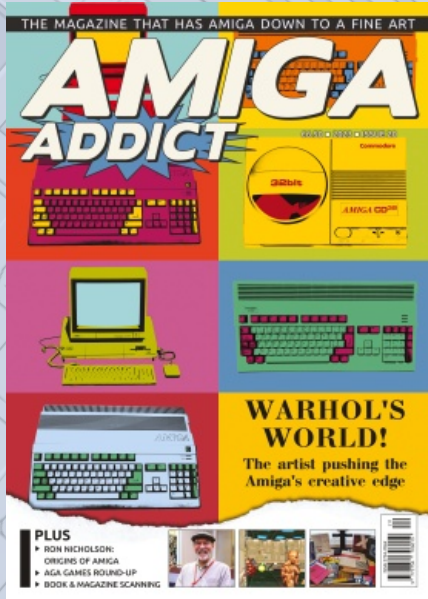
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# UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

## - Video game design is a funny old thing

By Simon Butler

[www.dinosaur-pie.co.uk](http://www.dinosaur-pie.co.uk)

dinosaur1957



I've been involved with game design for four decades this year and have designed many games from start to finish, yet it's only very recently that I have sat down and tried to figure out all its component parts and find out what's so special about them. The reason for this (if anyone is stuck for things to wonder about and is remotely curious as to what goes on in the head of someone my age) is that I'm on the cusp of starting an online video diary of the development of my latest ZX Spectrum Next game, *Quakestar*.

I'm considering this despite game development being complicated enough on its own, especially when one's coder is the curmudgeonly Michael "Flash" Ware, a man who plans everything weeks in advance and gets his drawers in a bunch if I haven't read every single txt file in our mutual Dropbox folder.

Like I said, game development is a convoluted rascal at the best of times, with ideas coming thick and fast and my super-swift coder throwing demos at me like there's no tomorrow. So, the prospect of creating video content of this process and editing it in such a way that it makes sense to Joe public, and has more than a modicum of entertainment value, is somewhat daunting.

I ran it by the good folk on Facebook and there were sufficient numbers who considered it a reasonably intriguing idea. Despite the fact that we are already two weeks or so into the project I don't think anyone will feel cheated that I'm not starting with a blank slate, so to speak, when the first episode hits the internet. If nothing else, it will give me something to look back on when the game is completed, and perhaps with a healthy dollop of visual material online that shows how much progress is being made, it



Robots, aliens, and bananas.

might keep me focused for a change and with my prodigious beak to the grindstone.

I have to be open here and also in my video footage, as and when I get round to creating such, that there's a fair bit of pixel work that has been sitting on my PC for a couple of years or more. That's not to say that I have cobbled this together from something I found lying in the dark recesses of my external hard drives. *Quakestar* has always been on my schedule since I first began working on products for the ZX Spectrum Next. Foolishly I assumed that anything I developed for said computer could be knocked out in the blink of an eye, what with them being Spectrum games and all. I mean I did it forty years ago, I worked on multiple versions of games simultaneously, so why should it be any different now?

I have no real answer to that other than it is.

Perhaps I've slowed down. I know my eyesight isn't up to snuff and the old bones creak something awful after using my mouse for more than a few hours, but these are mere excuses. The grey matter is as sharp as ever, and I'll keep telling myself that no matter what anyone else says. But prior to the first round of ZX



Get the key but mind the lasers!

Nexts reaching an eager audience I had started far too many titles and it was my own designs, *Monkey McGee* and *Quakestar* that fell by the wayside. *Lords of Midnight*, *Q-Bee* and at least two others were completed, but by that time I found that paid work took greater precedence and the projected titles started to collect digital dust until I forgot about them entirely. It was only due to encouragement from Michael Ware that I decided to revive *Quakestar*, which if I'm truthful, never got beyond me creating a sprite set and some rough map designs. In doing so, I also felt that *Monkey McGee* deserved to see the light of day and have duly started re-examining the work done on that.

Maybe I'm taking on too much if I am considering a video record of the development process, but I have to say that, for the first time in a while, I've got more enthusiasm for the process than I thought possible.

How long that will last is anyone's guess, but with Flash Ware cracking the whip, I'd like to think it's for the foreseeable future. Or at least until we've got this latest duo of titles under our belts. What comes after that is anyone's guess.

Here's to game development.



Quakestar early days. Lots of blocks.



Whirling blades are instant death!



Lasers and stars, but what do they do?



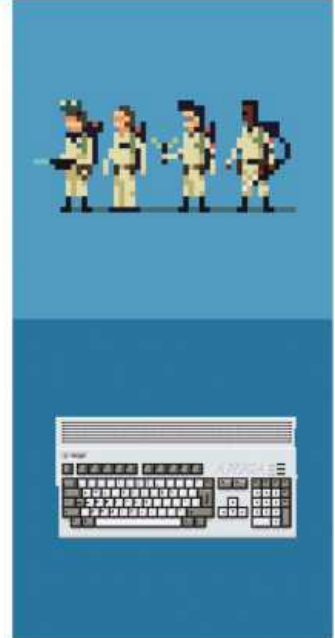


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